



iYunivesithi

Walter Sisulu

EWIRA - FIRE CONFERENCE

19 - 20 AUGUST 2026

EVENT PROGRAMME



19-20 AUGUST 2026

Bridging University, Industry & Community for Sustainable Futures

Conference Format

Format: Unconference

Model: Hybrid

Duration: 2 Days

Daily Hours: 08:30 – 18:00

Hybrid Sessions: 14:00 – 18:00 each day

Venues: Conference Room A and Conference Room B

Additional: Exhibitors Space

Unconference Format

Each session follows the Open Space Technology methodology:

- Conversation catalyst shares core argument/findings
- Open dialogue and questions
- Rapporteur captures key insights for synthesis session
- Participants may move freely between rooms (Law of Two Feet)

Sessions at a glance

EWIRA-FIRE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Themes	Session
University and Industry Partnerships	Day 1, Session 1 – Room A
Community Engagement and Social Impact	Day 1, Session 1 – Room B
Green Economy, Sustainability and Skills	Day 1, Session 1 – Room C
Curriculum Innovation and Teaching Practice	Day 1, Session 2 – Room A
Community Development and Rural Enterprise	Day 1, Session 2 – Room B
Curriculum Co-Creation and Innovative Pedagogy	Day 2, Session 4 – Room A
Innovative Practices and Research Synergies	Day 2, Session 4 – Room B
Policy, Mentorship and Professional Development	Day 2, Session 4 – Room C

DAY 1

Programme Director: Prof Palesa Makhetha-Kosi

08h30 – 11h00 Opening Ceremony & Welcome

Opening Address: VC Prof Thandi Mgwebi

Welcome by the DVC-RI: Prof Nosisi Feza

Conference Overview & Unconference Format Orientation: Prof Siyabonga Mxunyelwa

Fire Representative: Prof. Verdiana Grace Masanja

Keynote Introduction: Prof Nokulunga Mashwama

Keynote Address: Mrs Besky Maluleka Gunjiri

11h00 – 11h30 Morning Tea

11h30 – 13h00 Session 1

Setting the tone: Bridging University, Industry & Community for Sustainable Futures

Ms Soletu Sauli, Ms Lizelle Maurice, Prof Thobeka Ncanywa

Conference Room A Lead Discussant: Ms Soletu Sauli

Theme: University and Industry and Partnerships

University Collaborations with Magwa Tea Factory for Economic Revitalisation in Lusikisiki – Ms Olwethu Solundwana

Strategies Used for Local Economic Development in Mquma Local Municipality – Ms Nandipha Mantantana

Evaluating the Impact of University– Industry Work-Integrated Learning Partnerships on Sustainable Skills Development and Graduate Readiness at a Historically Disadvantaged South African University – Dr Tarisai Mpofu

University Industry Collaborations: Sustainability Initiatives that Benefit Both Sectors – Dr Tholani Tshuma

Conference Room B Lead Discussant: Ms Lizelle Maurice

Theme: Community Engagement and Social Impact

Co-Creating Sustainable Cultural Tourism through Community and Industry Engagement: The Case of City of uMhlathuze, South Africa – Ms Nomfundo Sinethemba Mzimela

Evaluating Academic Credentials in Hiring Decisions within the Finance and Engineering Departments: The Case of O.R. Tambo District Municipality – Ms Amanda Matswele

Assessing the Impact of Public Private Partnership on Rural Infrastructure Development in Mbhashe Local Municipality, Eastern Cape – Ms Sinazo Matshaya

Investigating the Causes of Parental Neglect among Juveniles: A Case of Bosasa Juvenile Prison, Qumbu Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa – Ms Abongile Zatu

Conference Room C Lead Discussant: Prof Thobeka Ncanywa

Theme: Green Economy, Sustainability and Skills

Effect of Laser Power on Microstructure and Strength of Ti/TiC Composites Produced by Laser Metal Deposition -Mr Xolile Mdlalo

Preparing Future Leaders: The Role of Emerging Technologies in Sustainable Hospitality Education – Dr Adelaide Rethabile Motshabi Pitso

Effects of Inclusive Education on Grade Four Learners' Mathematics Achievement in Selected Primary Schools, Oliver Reginald Tambo District, Eastern Cape – Mr Gcinikhaya Jojisa

Effects of Inclusive Education on Grade Four Learners' Mathematics Achievement in Selected Primary Schools, Oliver Reginald Tambo District, Eastern Cape – Mr Gcinikhaya Jojisa

Strengthening University Industry Partnerships for Advancing Sustainable Entrepreneurship Education and Regional Industrial Development in the Eastern Cape – Dr Nombulelo Dlova-Nongalo

Exploring Social Media as a Digital Support Tool for Parents and Caregivers of Children with Autism in South Africa – Ms Tina Bikitsha

Aligning Academic Programmes with Industry Needs to Equip Graduates for the Green Economy – Ms Asisipho Ngongo

Collaborative Partnerships and Teacher Capacity Building in Progressive Mathematics Education: A Systematic Literature Review – Dr Thabisa Maqoqa

Fostering Partnerships Climate: Cultivating a Community of Women with Disabilities at a Local Level (joint theme: Community Engagement and Outreach) – Dr Nonzwakazi B. Makiwane

Implementing Industry Sustainability Standards in University Operations: Advancing Responsible Resource Management and Sustainable Campus Practices – Prof Bulelwa Nguza-Mduba

Powerless Participation: Rethinking Industry–University Partnerships for Youth Empowerment and Sustainable Skills – Ms Luleka Marwarwa

Chlamydia trachomatis Prevalence and Risk Factors Among Women in King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality – Ms Amanda Dlamini

The Language of the Green Economy: Aligning Curriculum Terminology with Industry Skills Needs – Prof Beatrice Ekanjume

The Role of Strategic Public Relations in Strengthening University-Industry Partnerships for Sustainable Higher Education – Ms Queen Nokubonga Masango

The Role of Stakeholders in Sustainable Community Engagement – Mr Lwazi Hlongwe

The Language of the Green Economy: Aligning Curriculum Terminology with Industry Skills Needs – Prof Beatrice Ekanjume

The Language of the Green Economy: Aligning Curriculum Terminology with Industry Skills Needs – Prof Beatrice Ekanjume

Addressing Gender Discrimination: A Research Agenda for AI Skills in the Future Workforce – Dr Cheryl Akinyi Genga

Youth Unemployment in South Africa: Causes and Solutions in the Eastern Cape, Amathole Region – Mrs Zilungile Hlungulu

Rethinking Skills Development in South Africa: Addressing the Gap between Graduate Capabilities and Industry Needs in the Transition to a Green Economy – Ms Andisiwe Dumako

13h00 – 14h00 Lunch

14h00 – 15h45 Session 2

Conference Room A**Lead Discussant: Dr Tarisai Chikungwa-Everson*****Theme: Curriculum Innovation and Teaching Practice***

Bridging Higher Education and Technical Secondary School Curriculum Needs through Digitally Mediated Collaborative Teaching – Dr Jojokazi Mgetyana

Pedagogical Delivery Challenges in 21st-Century Higher Education: A Massification, Decolonisation and Technology Adoption Case in South Africa – Dr Dorah Dubihlela

Experiences of Teacher Educators in Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Teacher Education: A Case Study of Eastern Cape University –
Ms Nomaphelo Gwebinkumbi

Explainable AI for Industry-Aligned Curriculum Development in Computer Science and Data Science (joint theme: Curriculum Co-Creation) – Prof Ibidun Christiana Obagbuwa

Enhancing Postgraduate Entrepreneurship Learning Outcomes through the Entrepreneurship Venture Builder Model – Ms Ntomboxolo Girlie Chagi

Promoting the Uptake of Hospitality Studies in the Eastern Cape Schools, South Africa: Insights from Stakeholders -Ms Hlonipha Langelihle Bini

Conference Room B**Lead Discussant: Dr Dorah Dubihlela**
Theme: Community Development and Rural Enterprise

Household Responsibilities, Social Support, and Academic Performance among Learners in Child-Headed Households: Evidence from Rural Eastern Cape, South Africa –
Ms Onele Msuthu

Bamboo Adoption: A Sustainable Alternative Construction Material in the South African Construction Industry –
Ms Zukiswa Kulu

Exploring the Barriers of Women in Accessing and Using Menstrual Cups at Ngangelizwe Township, Eastern Cape -
Ms Yolanda Nyolukana

Reimagining Community Engagement: Leveraging Unemployed Graduates for Sustainable Adult Education in Rural South Africa –
Ms Zimasa Qaqamba Busuku

Employment Generation as a Mechanism of Rural Entrepreneurship for Strengthening Economic Resilience in Mnquma Local Municipality, Eastern Cape – Ms Xolelwa Gamndana

Enhancing Practical Assessment Tasks in Technical Sciences through Industry Collaboration: A Case Study at Walter Sisulu University – Dr Zukiswa Jutta-Ndinisa

Gender Discrimination of Female Managers in the Alfred Nzo West Education District – Ms Thembeke Beatrice Mokoena

15h45- 16h00 Afternoon Tea

16h00 – 17h15 Session 3

Cross-Session Reflections
Facilitator: Prof Sandra Chikotie**17h15 – 17h30 Closing Remarks / Networking**

DAY 2

From Dialogue to Impact: Co-Creating Solutions for Sustainable and Inclusive Futures

Programme Director: Dr Mathulo Shauli

08h30-10h00 Day 2 Plenary: Reflection & Panel Discussion

Welcome & Day 1 Highlights Recap: Prof Zizipho Mbulawa

Introduction of Keynote Speaker: Dr Clarah Dapira

Guest Speaker: Dr Bathibile Ramalapa

Panel Discussion: Prof Rusike, Dr Pelokazi Nqabeni, Ms Ludwe Macingwana

Open Floor Q&A

10h00 –10h30 Morning Tea

10h30 – 12h00 Session 4

Conference Room A

Lead

Discussant: Prof Pretty Mpiti

Theme: Curriculum Co-Creation and Innovative Pedagogy

Identifying Causes of Poor Quality of Education in Primary Schools in the Chris Hani East Education District – Ms Thembakazi Mkuyana

Transformative Teaching Approaches to Sustain Factors Contributing to Poor Reading Skills in English as a First Additional Language among Learners – Ms Nolusapho Sishuba

Teachers' Perspectives on Pedagogical Innovations and Opportunities in Grade 10 Essays in English Language: Using Nearpod – Dr Limkani Sincuba

Humanising Pedagogy for Mathematics Learning and Teaching in Higher Education – Dr Neliswa Gqoli

Whole School Evaluation Models for Curriculum Co-Creation: Aligning Teacher Education with Industry Needs – Mr Bafundi Mapisa

Conference Room B

Lead

Discussant: Dr Ncebakazi Galada

Theme: Innovative Practices and Research Synergies

Women as Intrapreneurs: Examining Contextual Factors for Lean Innovation in the South African Public Sector – Dr Unathi Thango

Digital Literacies in EFAL Classrooms: Opportunities and Challenges in South African Schools – Ms Nonzuzo Siyotywa

Exploring the Use of Visual Aids and Technological Devices in a Deaf School: O.R. Tambo Inland, Eastern Cape – Ms Philiswa Olga Tshota

From Policy to Practice: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Environmental Governance Frameworks in Driving Green Local Economic Development – The Case of Mnquma Local Municipality, Eastern Cape, South Africa – Ms Pamela Dodo

Public Debt Dynamics and Real Exchange Rate Volatility: Evidence from South Africa – Ms Yonela Tyani

Conference Room C

Lead Discussant: Prof Ibidun Christiana Obagbuwa

Theme: Policy, Mentorship and Professional Development

Enhancing Collaborative Communication between Accounting Student-Teachers and Mentors during Teaching Practice in Selected O.R. Tambo Coastal District Schools – Ms Zintle Ketwa

Mentorship and Career Advancement: Exploring the Relationship between Mentorship Quality and Professional Growth – Ms Asisipho Yonela Mangaliso

Incidences of Unplanned Pregnancy despite Availability of Contraceptives among Female University Students – Dr Tandiwe Veronica Mangxa

Exploring Best Practices for Building Impactful Mentor-Mentee Relationships in Higher Education Institutions – Ms Zizipho Jawuse

Creating Pathways for Industry Professionals to Support Students through Internships and Sustainability-Focused Mentorship – Ms Simamkele Menze

Reimagining Higher Education for Sustainability: Pathways to the Green Economy – Ms Belinda Rindai Musodza

Integrated Approaches for Foot-and-Mouth Disease Control in South Africa – Dr Chenaimoyo Lufutuko Faith Katiyatiya

Examining E-Government Efficiency and Accessibility in South African Higher Education – Ms Gaseti Thandazile

Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Higher Education: Curriculum Design, Assessment, and Student Engagement – Ms Nomkhitha Luke

De-employability and the Fracturing of Student Identity: A Sociological Inquiry into Inequality in South African Higher Education - Mr Athi Phiwani

Nurturing a Healthier Lifestyle: How Human Capital Development Impacts Under-Five Mortality Rate in South Africa - Ms Shenice Sinoyolo Kili

12h00 – 13:00 Session 5
Cross-Session Reflections
Facilitator: Dr Ncebakazi Galada

13h00 – 14h00 Lunch

Closing Ceremony

14h00-15h00

Conference Recommendations:
Prof Yolisa Madolo

Closing Remarks:
Prof Elphina Cishe

Vote of Thanks:
Prof Bulelwa Makena

DAY 2
CONCLUSION

Gala Dinner

20 AUGUST 2026

18:00 - 20:00

Programme Director:
Mathabo Hendricks

Welcome:
Dr Ncebakazi Galada

Introduction of Guest:
Dr Yolisa Mgedezi

Keynote Speaker:
Prof Tshidi Mohapelo & Ms Ludwe Macingwana

Vote of Thanks:
Dr Thandiwe Mangxa

Meet our Speakers



Besky Maluleka-Ngunjiri

Mrs Besky Maluleka-Ngunjiri, CIA, CCSA, is the Chief Audit Executive at Harmony Gold Mining Company. She has worked in the governance profession since 1999 and has served as a Chief Audit Executive for the past 19 years, providing independent assurance and strategic advice to boards, audit committees, and executive leadership.

Her career spans the mining, banking, chemicals, and public sectors, with professional experience across South Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, India, Papua New Guinea, and Australia. She has led assurance functions covering internal audit, risk management, internal controls, cybersecurity, forensic audits and regulatory compliance, with extensive experience in governance frameworks including the PFMA, MFMA, the Mining Charter, Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX), Japanese Sarbanes-Oxley (J-SOX) and the King Codes on Corporate Governance.

In addition to her executive responsibilities, Mrs Maluleka-Ngunjiri serves as Chair of the Audit Committee of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and as a Non-Executive Director of the Institute of Internal Auditors South Africa (IIASA). Through these roles, she continues to contribute to strengthening governance, accountability, and the internal audit profession.

She holds an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA), awarded with distinction (Cum Laude) by the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business. She also holds a BCompt, HCompt and Certificate in the Theory of Accounting (CTA) from the University of South Africa (UNISA), and has completed the Executive Leadership Development Programme at the University of Pretoria.

Mrs Maluleka-Ngunjiri is recognised for her practical and principled approach to governance, ethical leadership and organisational accountability. She is passionate about building resilient institutions, developing future leaders and advancing governance practices that create sustainable value for organisations and society.





Prof. Dr.-Ing. Verdiana Grace Masanja

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Verdiana Grace Masanja is a Professor of Mathematics at Kampala International University in Tanzania (KIUT), Professor Emerita of Applied Mathematics and Computational Science at the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology (NM-AIST), Tanzania, and an Adjunct Professor at Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University (DHBW) Mosbach, Germany. She holds a Doctor of Engineering in Fluid Mechanics from the Technical University of Berlin, Germany, and MSc and BSc degrees in Mathematics and Physics from the University of Dar es Salaam. With over 50 years of experience in academia, research and innovation, her interdisciplinary research spans applied and computational mathematics, mathematical modelling, computational fluid dynamics, epidemiology, environmental

and hydrological modelling, optimisation, and data-driven and AI-based modelling. She has authored over 100 peer-reviewed publications and holds a Tanzanian patent in digital disease modelling and visualisation.

She has held senior university leadership positions for over two decades and currently serves as Vice President of the African Mathematical Union for Eastern Africa and Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Tanzania Forestry Research Institute (TAFORI). A strong advocate for women and girls in mathematics, science and technology, Prof. Masanja has contributed extensively to gender-responsive STEM education, research capacity development and the advancement of women researchers in Africa. Her work has received recognition from organisations including the Next Einstein Forum, FAWE and HeForShe.





Dr Bathabile Ramalapa

Dr Ramalapa leads the Biotherapeutics Formulation and Delivery platform at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), where her team develops drug delivery systems for diabetes, breast cancer, and antimicrobial resistance, engineered for African climate conditions and affordability. She holds two PhDs, in Chemical Sciences from the University of Liège and in Experimental and Analytical Pharmacology from the University of Angers, completed under an Erasmus Mundus dual PhD fellowship. Dr Ramalapa is also an Extraordinary Senior Lecturer in the Research Focus Area: Material Science Innovation and Modelling at North-West University (NWU), where she contributes to postgraduate training, research supervision, and capacity development in biomaterials and health technologies.

Her career carries an Africa Oxford Fellowship in Health Innovation and Entrepreneurship from Oxford University, a Novartis Research Fellowship in Switzerland and a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation visiting scholar grant training at the School of Pharmacy in Nottingham university. She has been a Senior Technical advisor for the Vaccine Innovation Manufacturing Strategy commissioned by the DSTI. She serves on the Human Sciences Research Council Research Ethics Committee. As an emissary of the Science Diplomacy Capital for Africa, she advocates for African science diplomacy, fostering global partnerships and promoting science-informed health policy. She also serves on the BRICS working group for materials science and nanotechnology, representing South Africa on that platform.





Prof. Thobeka Ncanywa

Prof. Thobeka Ncanywa serves as a Professor of Economics at Nelson Mandela University, where she holds the prestigious FALF-FREF-NMU Research Chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion. Her areas of expertise encompass Applied Econometrics, Development Economics, Monetary Economics, and Entrepreneurship Education. Her research is anchored in the theme of “Building Sustainable Economies,” focusing on the complexities of contemporary entrepreneurship development, finance, and economic interdependencies. Prof. Ncanywa has taken the lead in establishing and advancing research programmes that promote entrepreneurship and enhance financial inclusion. She actively contributes to inclusive research leadership and seeks to transform the academic landscape through her commitment to entrepreneurship education. Her efforts include mentoring female researchers and early-career academics, integrating entrepreneurship into the curriculum, and enhancing an environment conducive to the commercialisation of research outputs.





Prof. Matshediso 'Tshidi' Mohapeloa

Professor Matshediso 'Tshidi' Mohapeloa is the Dean of Commerce, a full Professor, the Director of Rhodes University Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator (Rhodes-CFERI), and previously Coordinated the Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Enterprise Management at the Rhodes Business School. She is the Chair of Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) community of practice (CoP) on Entrepreneurship Learning and Teaching.

Her diverse work experience ranges from developmental to business academia. A researcher, a consultant, an academic, and a development expert with extensive work in socio-economic and related issues. Areas of expertise includes publications on entrepreneurship with a social focus, engaging communities in research with impact, and

a keen interest in strengthening innovative solutions incorporating technology to mitigate social and environmental challenges. Sees entrepreneurship as a means to an end where innovation, ethical leadership, sustainability, and entrepreneurship benefit society/the community/ local citizens. Focus on community-engaged research supporting small and micro enterprises (township economy and survivalist entrepreneurs), and cooperatives targeting youth and women-led enterprises. Loves stimulating young, creative minds through knowledge sharing and skills development.

"I believe entrepreneurship can be used as a pathway not only for financial sustainability but to improve people's quality of life and still be good to the planet".





Ms Ludwe Macingwane

Ms Macingwane heads the East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ) Science & Technology Park (STP) and is an experienced leader in strategic project development and multidisciplinary team management. She is currently President of the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASP) Africa Chapter, representing Africa on the global IASP Board. Her key achievements include securing over R100 million for an Automotive and Manufacturing Incubator, establishing a Regional Innovation Forum connecting academia, industry and government, leading Centres of Excellence, establishing an advanced Design Centre, and facilitating the establishment and accreditation of a Water and Food Laboratory within 18 months.





Ms Lizelle Maurice

Lizelle Maurice is the Executive Director and CEO of the Border-Kei Chamber of Business and the first woman to hold this position in the organisation's 149-year history. She also serves as a director and trustee across several organisations, including Own Haven Housing Association, Parkplace Boutique Hotels, the Hub Owner's Association, Cooper-King Property Development Trust, Gatekeepers South Africa and Eyabantwana Children's Trust. She has held various leadership positions in business, tourism and community organisations, including the Businesswomen's Association of South Africa and ECSECC. Lizelle is passionate about empowering women and young people to realise their potential and purpose. She is a people-centred leader who has pioneered several initiatives throughout her career.





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