

NEWS

February 2012

Two outstanding 2011 matriculants choose teaching to serve and inspire

Daring to Teach heroes!

Two first year Education students were each awarded a **VC's Scholarship Award** at the recently held VC's Prestigious Scholars Awards Dinner. These two students formed part of the top 28 first year entrants to NMMU this year, and both chose Education as their field of study!

Tarryn Lovemore and Trudi van Olm have chosen to become Intermediate Phase teachers, both in the Maths and Science stream. They each achieved 7 A's in the NSC, half of their subjects passed with over 90%! "Their choice to place their talents to serve, through Education, is an act of commitment, faith and courage", commented Prof Denise Zinn.

"I want to teach people and I want to become a role model. I want to inspire, like my teachers inspired me..."

An added distinction was that our VC's scholarship recipient in 2011, Ms Anika Botha, got the highest overall pass of all the 2011 VC's scholars! Anika (now in 2nd year B Ed FET) was asked to do the motivational speech on behalf of the 2011 top scholars to the 2012 entering cohort. She delivered an excellent speech, around the theme of stepping up to a challenge.

Executive Dean, Prof Denise Zinn, attended the awards and commented on how proud she felt of the faculty, staff and students, "I am often extremely proud of our Faculty, but on this glittering occasion of the VC's Scholarship Awards, a wonderful event coordinated by our Marketing division, I felt especially so, seeing the rising generation of stars commit, taking on the DARE to teach under such circumstances as we have at this point in our country's struggle for an Education system that does not yet, but needs to, serve the majority."



From left, Anika Botha, Prof Denise Zinn, Tarryn Lovemore and Trudi van Olm

Hitch-hiking to class!

Inspirational stories of sacrifice

Buzani drives down from Cape Town... Nandi travels from Idutywa... Marcel drives from Noupooort near Colesburg... and four students hitch hike to attend workshop...

All are registered students in the part-time B Ed Honours programme where students are expected to attend Saturday lectures most weekends, and use the weeks in between to peruse materials and prepare assignments.

"We are truly humbled by the resilience of others..."

Discovering the level of sacrifice these students are prepared to make towards achieving a higher qualification in order to become better educators, humbled and inspired the lecturers teaching on the programme. Dr Lyn Webb and Dr Raj Kurup's sentiments are shared by Head of Programme, Dr Kathija Adam, and School Director, Prof Alette Delport.

"The sacrifices that students like Buzani (and perhaps others we are not aware of) make to become better educators inspire me and make our efforts so much more rewarding!" Dr Raj Kurup remarked. Buzani Khumalo heads the Learner Centre at the Astronomy Institute in CT.

Who are YOUR role models, in Education, in Life, in Work?

2012 student orientation

First year Education students participated in a variety of welcoming and orientation events held during February

2012 PGCE camp at 'The Willows'

For two days during the week before lectures all 2012 PGCE students attended a 'camp' at The Willows. So the question to ask at the end of each camp is "Was it worth the expense?" What did the students gain as a result of the exercise?

The contact time with PGCE students is limited by the amount of time that they spend at schools so these two days of high contact at the camp ensures that everyone is able to start lectures the following week fully conversant with all the administrative details required of any programme. We complete the registration formalities and sort out any hitches with choices of methods.



PGCE students arrive for their 2 day camp

Secondly, few of these post-graduate students have had any exposure to schools and schooling in South Africa since they themselves were in schools, and in most cases this experience is limited to one type of school. The interactive workshops expose students to current issues in schools. Issues discussed involve amongst others, new curricula initiatives, assessment, discipline (their perennial favourite), new educational technologies and social conditions under which schooling is presently occurring. Needless to say, each of these topics give rise to vigorous debate and discussion.

There is also the social side where students get to meet their colleagues and lecturers in a relatively informal environment. This interaction is fostered by the sharing of bungalows, a relaxed (and delicious) braai and a trivia quiz in the evening where, unless you chose a multi-faceted team, you stand little chance of getting a reasonable score.

Overall, we use this time to introduce students, all of whom are new to the Faculty of Education to our humanising pedagogy.

Fun Extravaganza! The first year Education (B Ed) students were again treated to a comprehensive programme of orientation during the first week of February, culminating in the much anticipated 'fun extravaganza' display of creative talents!



briefs

2012 Research Seminar Series

The faculty research seminar series kicked off this month with a thought provoking and moving presentation by colleague, Dr Lyn Webb.



Her presentation, "Do I hear what I think you are saying? Multilingual teachers' perceptions of language issues", explored some possible solutions for teacher educators to the question, "How can we use both the teacher and learners' home language as a resource to improve academic access?" as derived from her research and project work with teachers who do not teach in their home language.

Dominican University Partnership

A team from the Dominican University of California spent some time in the faculty this month mainly planning the placement of 10-12 of their graduate students at various metro schools. In addition, they attended various faculty meetings, seminars and functions during their visit.

Using learners' home language to develop 'exploratory talk' in the maths classroom

Mathematical Reasoning SLP delivers results

The GMSA-funded Mathematical Reasoning SLP, delivered to three cohorts of teachers in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth over the last two years, was developed from the framework of a NMMU PhD thesis. The evaluations from the SLP were so positive that GMSA co-ordinator, Paula du Plooy, obtained funding from GMSA for the SLP to be conducted again during 2012.

The Mathematical Reasoning SLP tutors (Les Foster and Di Mason) work with teachers to conduct a diagnostic mathematics baseline test at the beginning of grades 4, 5, 6 and 7. The intervention guides the participants through a progression of strategies to use the learners' home language as a resource in developing exploratory talk (Mercer & Littleton, 2007) in mathematics classrooms.

Strategies of mathematical problem solving are introduced to the teachers so that they themselves experience the power of the approach before they introduce it into their multilingual classes.

Les Foster visits each participant in the classroom to provide support and encouragement to the teachers, as well as to observe the implementation of the strategies over the duration of the SLP. At the end of the eight month module, the learners write a post-test.

In all three cohorts there has been a statistically significant increase in learners' scores. The teachers graph their learners' progress and critically reflect on the implementation of the SLP in practice. The standard of the portfolios completed as well as the standard of the examination scripts has been extremely encouraging.

The 2011 GMSA cohort of the Mathematical Reasoning SLP received their certificates (see photo below) at the East Cape Training Centre at a function attended by Department of Education officials, school principals, General Motors of SA representatives, NMMU staff and participants.



Worthwhile result from PhD research study

Media Centre opens

As part of her research study for her PhD, **Dr Didi Geduld** undertook a project which looked at creating learning ties for learners with learning challenges.

The first phase was establishing a mentoring programme between Sancto Primary School and Collegiate Girls Primary School, whereby remedial educators in both the foundation and intermediate phases introduced strategies to teachers to better identify and remediate learning challenges.

The second phase was the establishment of a school media centre at Sancto. Books were donated from learners at Collegiate Primary School; parents at Sancto Primary took responsibility for covering the books whilst the teachers were accountable for creating the infrastructure. This collaborative process ensured joint ownership by all parties involved in the project.

As Didi comments, "This initiative and the realization there-of reminds me of the power of the watermelon seed as observed by William Jennings Bryan. He says in this piece of writing that the power of the watermelon seed is invisible, yet its presence still cannot be denied. Something that seemed hopeless and not achievable encouraged us to be determined and make it happen!"



Dr Didi Geduld with Mr Noel Penny (Librarian at NMMU Main Library) at the opening ceremony of the Media Centre at Sancto Primary School

From this endeavourer I learned, as Aeschylus would say, "When a man is willing and eager, God joins in".

School Improvement Programme of Action: collaborative engagement envisaged

Centre for the Community School & Manyano

The faculty's Centre for the Community School (CCS) recently hosted a meeting session with local principals and faculty staff (see photo alongside).



The core purpose of the meeting was to identify and explore areas of common interest between the work of the Manyano Schools and our Faculty, with a view to engaging in collaborative work. This work will also form part of the Faculty and University's engagement activities.

At the meeting a group of principals, who are members of the Manyano Schools Network, presented their *Programme of Action for School Improvement* to the Faculty Management Committee (FMC) members and other interested faculty staff in attendance. There was also lively discussion around issues raised and possible collaborative avenues.

The CCS team will collate the information and materials generated, and keep everyone informed as to the way forward.

A busy but rewarding Fulbright year

Fulbright Postdoctoral scholar in USA: University of Washington (2010-2011)

Dr Sylvan Blignaut

27 November 2010 - a presentation at the University of Washington with a Fulbright scholar from Hong Kong

16 Nov 2010 - a presentation at the University of Washington: *The implementation of curriculum reform in South African schools*

November 2010 - attended African Studies Conference in San Francisco organised by Fulbright for sub-Saharan Fulbright scholars

28 February 2011 - invited by Purdue University (Indianapolis) for a lecture. Fulbright distributes your CV to different institutions and if they are interested you get invited through the Occasional Fulbright Lectures. This is the Alma Mater of the first and last astronaut that ever walked on the moon.



Can you spot Sylvan? Group photo at Wing Luke of Fulbright Scholars

28 March 2011 - invited for two lectures in Puerto Rico. I also appeared on an hour long history TV channel the following day fielding answers on South Africa's transition and political economy

30-02 April - attended a seminar on human rights in Chicago that was organised for Fulbright scholars across the USA

Mid April - attended the American Educational Research Association Conference in New Orleans. I also visited Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon and Vancouver.

After Thanksgiving weekend the University was closed for three days due to heavy snowfalls (see photo alongside, me in the snow!). I spent this weekend on an island in the Seattle area with my host.

