



# CUT WOMEN ARE THE HEARTBEAT OF ITS VISION

**Ace Moloi**

The Central University of Technology (CUT) understands that to be a pioneering and innovative institution, it has to treat the women in its employ with respect and invest in their development. Not only does the institution produce ground-breaking technologies that revolutionise industries, but also a crop of outstanding women who can compete with the best minds in their respective fields.



## Gloria Pule, Deputy Campus Director, Welkom

Integrity, fairness, excellence and a listening spirit are the driving values behind the newly appointed CUT Welkom campus deputy director, Gloria Pule, who became a junior lecturer at the institution in 2016. Shortly thereafter, she rose to the position of departmental manager: accounting and auditing. A fine product of CUT, Pule holds a National Diploma and B-Tech in internal auditing, and has also gone on to obtain a Master's degree in Higher Education from the neighbouring University of the Free State. The 41 year-old Pule admits that it is not easy for women to rise in spaces that were once seen as strongholds for men. She mentions that, often times, they have to hold back how they really feel to avoid being called emotional. Again, their decisions are constantly questioned in a manner that's rare for men. Despite all that, Pule believes that being a woman is a superpower that allows her to connect deeper with the people she leads. "As Africans, we're taught to value people as people, regardless of their status. So, the way you help each and every person that comes your way, that's what makes you the cream on top of everything," she concludes.



Central University of  
Technology, Free State





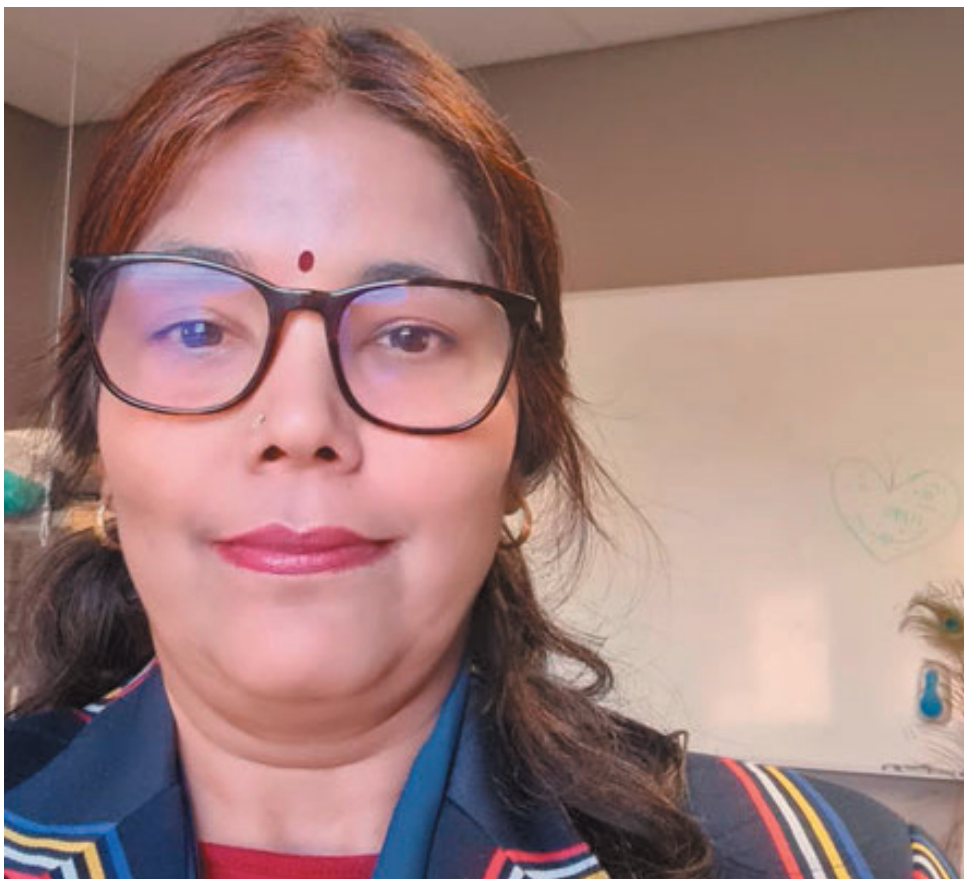
## Ayanda Nyathi, Deputy Director for Protection Services, Institutional

The pulse of CUT's responsibility to provide a secure working and learning environment is a 33 year-old daring strategist, Ayanda Nyathi. Born in Mpumalanga, Ayanda identified God's window of opportunity to break into an industry that's typically known for being a man cave. With two Master's degrees in security management and business administration respectively, and a track record in central banking and intelligence, it's not surprising that Ayanda is the first woman in the history of the university to occupy her current position. "It's hard to find women within the space, especially in leadership positions," she says. For her, this means being part of making history. "It's challenging in a positive way because you understand that you are standing there as a woman, you're an example as well as you're creating history for the women that are to come after you," she explains. Although Ayanda encounters backward mentalities when she engages external stakeholders who don't expect a woman to be in her position, she states that internally, the CUT community is progressive. For example, during protests, she has found that open communication is a more effective strategy to manage tensions. "I think it's not even a situation of being tough but of being strategic. You make them realise that your concern is their safety and security. You need to work with the police and crowd control to ensure that everyone is safe during demonstrations," shares the accomplished security manager who feeds her fashion design passion when she wants to let her guard down.



## Dr Mantoa Molete, Lecturer, Welkom Campus

To communications and linguistics scholar, Dr Mantoa Molete, what makes CUT an attractive space is its commitment to inclusion. "To be a CUT woman means that you are part of diversity. We are a very diverse group of people. And the fact that you can embrace yourself and it feels like home, which is what a lot of workspaces don't have," describes the charismatic academic, stating that the university further recognises women for their authenticity. The fact that Dr Molete was born in Welkom, and is currently based in the mining town, gives her the opportunity to contribute to the development of a community that shaped her. "The most important thing for women is to stay authentic. We as women have a tendency to want to copy these characteristics that men have of wanting to show that we have power. Don't try and change who you are to fit the space; the space must adapt to who you are," she advises. At just 35, Dr Molete has cut an iconic figure that makes education fashionable to many young black youth, especially in the Free State. Among others, she prides in is that she has supervised and promoted a couple of Master's students, all this while keeping her life balanced with sleep, social activities and creating fun TikTok videos.



## Dr Ritu Bhagwandeem, MSTE Departmental Manager, Bloemfontein

While the trending stereotype is that people in science are nerdy beings that lack artistic interest, CUT Welkom's Dr Ritu Bhagwandeem has gone against the myths to enjoy life in its lengths and breadths. She says in addition to cooking and gardening, she loves listening to Indian music and has a passion for various forms of classical and folk dances. Professionally, Dr Bhagwandeem inhales and exhales science and maths. Currently, she is CUT Welkom's Departmental Manager for MSTE education and lectures chemistry to undergraduate, pre-service teachers, as well as supervising master's and doctoral candidates. Dr Bhagwandeem, who joined CUT in 2011, regards the institution's offer as the best out of the three she had received, and has since stayed with the university for more than 10 years. Being a woman to her means an inherent grace to bring everyone on board as she rises. "My biggest strength is that I am a woman who is confident, resilient, and God fearing! Being able to handle stress, taking ownership and accountability of my actions helps me to be proud of myself. Being a woman, one could accommodate a broader community, staff and students and at the same time walk with those falling behind," states the 52 years old scholar who holds an M.Phil, MSc as well as PhD, among others.