



Siyaphumelela
we succeed

2025 CONFERENCE

Reimagining Student Success and
Expanding Opportunity for All

08-11
July
2025

Indaba Hotel, Spa and Conference
Centre, Fourways, Johannesburg

Welcome by the Saide CEO

Welcome to the Siyaphumelela Network Student Success Conference 2025

On behalf of Saide and The Kresge Foundation, we have great pleasure in welcoming you to the 2025 Siyaphumelela Conference. This year's gathering, under the theme "*Reimagining student success and expanding opportunity for all*", invites us to reflect, reimagine, and renew our collective commitment to transforming student success in South Africa's higher education sector.

Launched in 2014, Siyaphumelela was born out of a bold vision: **to improve student success through data-informed decision-making and evidence-based practices**. Over the past 11 years, the initiative has grown from a pioneering idea into a national movement that is reshaping institutional cultures, policies, and practices. Now in its third phase with an expanded – and still growing – partner network, Siyaphumelela builds on a decade of learning and impact, with a deep focus on equity, sustainability, and systemic transformation.

We are proud to be joined by 20 of South Africa's 26 public universities, reaching approximately 80% of all students in public higher education. Through collaborative learning, data, and a relentless focus on student outcomes, Siyaphumelela institutions are taking huge strides in improving retention, throughput and other success rates, especially for underprivileged students. These remarkable achievements are a testament to the commitment of institutional leaders, student success change agents, and our partners.

In partnership with The Kresge Foundation, Saide serves as the backbone organisation of the Siyaphumelela initiative. But we are more than a support structure. Our role is to convene, support, and amplify the work of institutions and other stakeholders committed to student success. We are a catalyst for innovation and systemic change in education.

As we embrace this critical moment, we invite you to bring your curiosity, engage critically and be fully present. Let's continue building this into a transformative student success movement.

Welcome to Siyaphumelela 2025.

Innocent Nkata

Saide CEO

Welcome by Saide Programme Lead: Student Success

Welcome to the Siyaphumelela Network Student Success Conference 2025

This year's conference theme, "*Reimagining student success and expanding opportunity for all*", aims to inspire delegates to reimagine traditional approaches and embrace new and innovative strategies that empower students to complete their studies successfully, thrive in their careers, contribute meaningfully to society and achieve lasting economic mobility. The theme further encapsulates our vision of scaling out, scaling up and scaling deep, fostering innovation and collaboration and driving systemic change.

The Siyaphumelela Conference aims to:

1. **Share Evidence-Based and Scalable Interventions** – Share with delegates proven strategies that can be implemented for transformative post-secondary student success.
2. **Encourage Collaboration** – Create spaces for inter- and intra-institutional sharing of insights, learn from each other's experiences and work together to drive change.
3. **Advance Scholarship in Student Success** – Explore what student success looks like from a Siyaphumelela practitioner's perspective, how it is integrated within the institution, and deepen the academic discourse.
4. **Embed the Student Voice** – Ensure students actively participate in presentations and discussions to keep their perspectives central.
5. **Foster Innovation and Advocacy** - Advocate for Siyaphumelela as a transformative, sustainable and scalable model for Student Success, encouraging innovative practices and solutions.

The venue: **The Indaba Hotel, Spa and Conference Centre** is situated on Winnie Mandela Drive Fourways, Johannesburg **GPS Co-ordinates: S25.9996779, E28.0123028**). Secure parking is available.

Registration: This will take place in the foyer of the Kgotla from 09h00-18h00 on Tuesday 8 July, and from 08h00 to 18h00 on the remaining days, except for Friday 11 July where the registration desk will close at 10h00. Please register at the desk to receive your name tag, conference programme and delegate gift.

Programme: A printable version of the conference programme is available for your convenience. You can also access the digital Programme and Abstracts document on the [conference website](#).

The conference includes:

- **Plenary sessions:** Keynotes, invited papers and panel discussions.
- **Concurrent sessions:** Including multi-institution engagements, Siyaphumelela Network Partner Sharing presentations and 30 minute and 15 minute presentations. We received over 140 proposals, carefully reviewed with 123 selected for the conference. The concurrent session themes are: Student Support; Use of Data; Institutional Change; Teaching and Learning; Student Voice; and Beyond Completion.
- **Poster Session:** This year reintroduces the Poster Session, taking place on Tuesday 08 July. Please join us for snacks, a drink and networking from 18h00
- **Cocktail Function:** All delegates are invited to join our cocktail function on Thursday 10 July from 18h00.
- **Parking:** Delegates can park for free at the Indaba Hotel, Spa and Conference Venue.
- **Connectivity:** Free Wi-Fi will be available for all delegates at the conference venue. The password will be provided at the venue. Limited extension cords and multi-plugs will be available for charging laptops.
- **Online participation:** You can engage online during the conference via [LinkedIn](#).

We look forward to a successful, reimagined student success conference filled with collaboration, sharing and networking.

Best wishes

Ashton

Saide Programme Lead: Student Success

About the 2025 Siyaphumelela Conference

Siyaphumelela Conference Aims

The Siyaphumelela Conference aims to:

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2. **Encourage Collaboration** – Create spaces for inter- and intra-institutional sharing of insights, learn from each other's experiences and work together to drive change.
3. **Advance Scholarship in Student Success** – Explore what student success looks like from a Siyaphumelela practitioner's perspective, how it is integrated within the institution, and deepen the academic discourse.
4. **Embed the Student Voice** – Ensure students actively participate in presentations and discussions to keep their perspectives central.
5. **Foster Innovation and Advocacy** – Advocate for Siyaphumelela as a transformative, sustainable and scalable model for Student Success, encouraging innovative practices and solutions.

Some Conference Highlights

Keynote Presenter: Dr Tim Renick



Named one of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders by Fortune magazine, Timothy Renick is the founding Executive Director of the National Institute for Student Success and Professor at Georgia State University. Between 2008-2020, he directed the

student success efforts of the university, overseeing a 70% improvement in graduation rates and the elimination of all equity gaps based on students' race, ethnicity, or income level. Dr. Renick has testified on strategies for helping university students succeed before both the U.S. Senate and House, and he has twice been invited to speak at the White House. His work has been covered by the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Time, and CNN and cited by former President Barack Obama.

Dr. Renick has been recognised as one of the Most Innovative People in Higher Education by the Washington Monthly. He received the Award for National Leadership in Student Success Innovation and the prestigious McGraw Prize in Higher Education. With over \$70 million in grants, he has led initiatives aimed at improving outcomes and equity in college education. Dr. Renick graduated summa cum laude from Dartmouth College and holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in Religion from Princeton University.

Guest Speaker: Andrew Magliozzi



Andrew Magliozzi is the Co-Founder and CEO of Mainstay, a mission-driven technology company dedicated to helping learners navigate critical moments in their educational and career

journeys through human-centered, AI-enhanced coaching. For more than a decade, Andrew has led innovation in higher education technology, improving enrollment, retention, and completion outcomes for millions of students—particularly those from historically underserved populations.

A passionate advocate for equity and innovation, Andrew frequently speaks on responsible and effective uses of AI in education and workforce development. His recent appearances include the ASU GSV Summit, AACRAO, AASCU, and the AI Assistant Summit, and his insights have been featured in Inside Higher Ed.

Andrew holds degrees from Harvard College and Hack Reactor, and continues to explore the transformative intersections of behavioral science, education, and technology.

Social Events

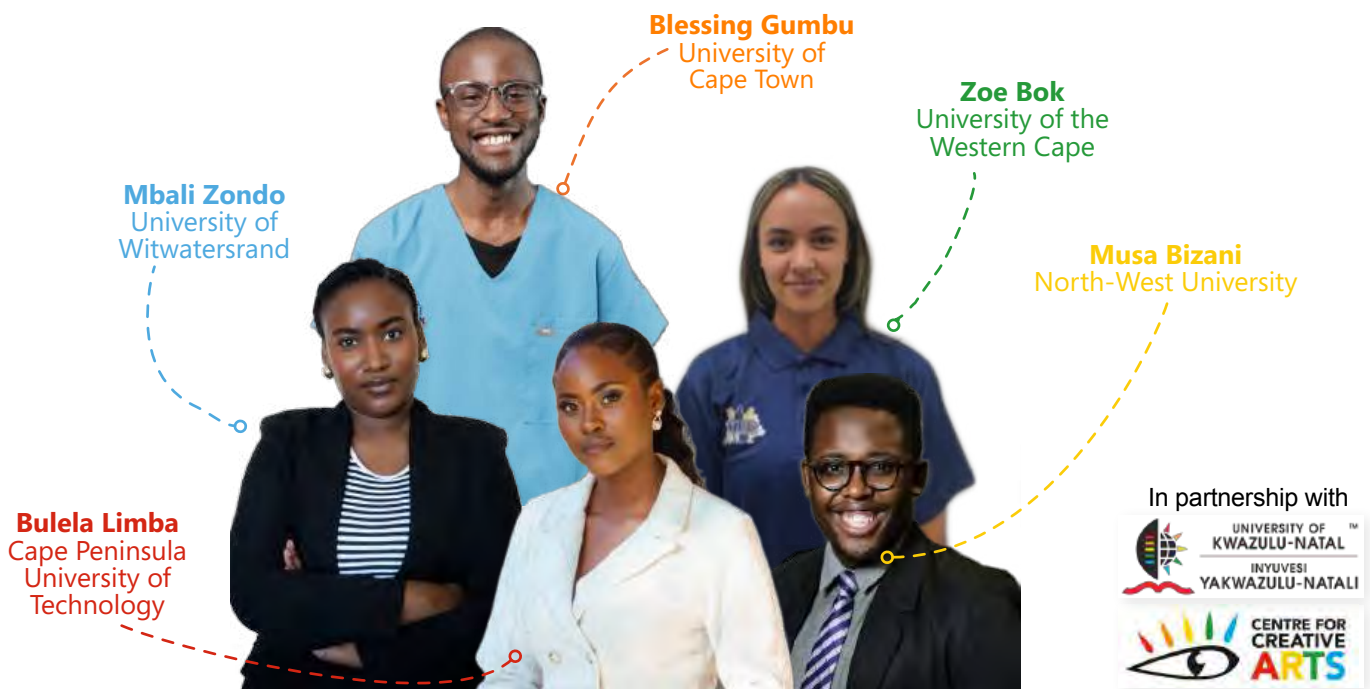


A highlight of the conference will be the Siyaphumelela Conference Cocktail Function, taking place on the evening of Thursday, 10 July 2025. This social event offers a valuable opportunity for informal engagement and networking among higher education professionals, policymakers, funders, and partners committed to advancing student success. The evening will feature light refreshments and drinks, and a relaxed atmosphere designed to foster meaningful networking beyond the formal sessions of the conference. Delegates will also have the opportunity to unwind and enjoy time on the dancefloor. We look forward to your participation in this special occasion.

Dress: African / Traditional / Heritage. (Optional)

Siyaphumelela Scholars 2025

The Siyaphumelela Scholar Programme is an inspiring initiative designed to recognise and celebrate outstanding students from our network of 20 universities across South Africa. **Five scholars have been selected** from nominations submitted by these institutions, celebrating students who benefited from Siyaphumelela student success interventions at their institution, exemplifying leadership, resilience and a commitment to helping other students succeed in their studies. Each selected scholar will have the opportunity to develop and present their "I Am" poems, a powerful expression of their personal journeys, identities, and aspirations. These poems will be recited during the conference, providing a platform for the scholars to share their unique voices. The conference will culminate in a panel discussion on the final day, where the scholars will engage in a thought-provoking dialogue, reflecting on their experiences and the transformative impact of the Siyaphumelela Initiative.



Programme

8 July

Registration 09:00 - 18:30

Venue: Kgotla Foyer

Finger Lunch 12:00 - 13:30

Venue: Kgotla 1 & 2

Plenary Session 13:30 - 17:00

Venue: Kgotla 1 & 2

13:30 - 14:00

Welcome and Introduction

Bill Moses
The Kresge Foundation

Innocent Nkata
Saide

14:00 - 15:30

Keynote 1

Chair: *Bill Moses*

Timothy Renick
Georgia State University
Atlanta
United States

15:30 - 16:00

Refreshments and Networking

Venue: Kgotla Foyer

16:30 - 17:00

South African Dream Scholar 2025

Chair: *Ashton Maherry*

I Am Poem

Bradley Gawie
Central University of Technology

Sibahle Mabaso
University of the Free State

Raising the Tide for Student Success - A Conversation with Business and Philanthropy (By Invitation Only) 17:00 - 18:00

Venue: Lethabo

Chair: *Francois Strydom*

Poster Session 17:00 - 18:00

Venue: Plenary: Kgotla 1 & 2

- **Art gallery of Student Voice for Enabled Student Agency: The Case of Walter Sisulu University Extended Curricula Programme FTEN Orientation Programme**
Mathentamo, P. and Mnengi-Gweva, D.
Walter Sisulu University
- **Co-Creation of a First-Year Transition Programme Through Student–Staff Partnership**
Bok, Z., Adams, B., Hlanjwa, T. and Jaftha, M.
University of the Western Cape
- **Knowing, Doing and Transforming: Developing an Implementation Framework for Building Institutional Capacity Towards a Data-Informed Culture at Durban University of Technology**
Muller, N., Parker, K. and Maherry A.
Saide
- **Socratic GPTs: Enhancing Critical Thinking and Student Engagement through AI**
Noqamza, M.
University of KwaZulu-Natal
- **StudyWell: A Strategic Framework for Student Well-being**
Ribas, C. and Du Toit, C.
North-West University
- **The Finish Line Game: Advancing Student Success through Equity-Based Simulation**
Mmbadi, E. and Meintjes, A.
University of the Free State
- **Thriving Students: Linking Well-being and Student Success**
Sinclair, E. and Davids, C.
Stellenbosch University
- **UCT's Chatbot Evolution: From FAQ-based to AI-powered**
Charitar, D. and Sithaldeen, R.
University of Cape Town
- **Western Cape Regional Network Collaboration on Student Success**
Western Cape Siyaphumelela Regional Network
University of Cape Town

Registration 09:00 - 16:00

Venue: Kgotla Foyer

Plenary Session 09:00 - 10:30

Venue: Kgotla 1 & 2

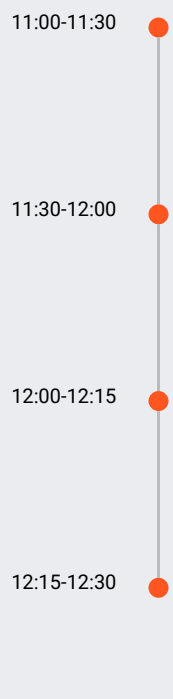
09:00 - 09:10	<div><div>2025 Siyaphumelela Scholar Chair: <i>Ashton Maherry</i></div><div>I Am Poem <i>Blessing Gumbu</i> University of Cape Town</div></div>
09:10 - 10:20	<div><div>Deputy-Vice Chancellor Panel Discussion Chair: <i>Ashton Maherry</i></div><div><div><i>Eucebious Lekalakala-Mokgele</i> University of Venda</div><div><i>Muki Moeng</i> Nelson Mandela University</div><div><i>'Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela</i> Rhodes University</div><div><i>Catherine Moran</i> University of Canterbury New Zealand</div><div><i>Ruksana Osman</i> University of the Witwatersrand</div></div></div>
10:20 - 10:30	<div><div>2025 Siyaphumelela Scholar Chair: <i>Ashton Maherry</i></div><div>I Am Poem <i>Zoe Bok</i> University of the Western Cape</div></div>
10:30 - 11:00	<div><div>Refreshments and Networking Venue: Kgotla Foyer</div></div>

Concurrent Sessions 11:00 - 12:30

Concurrent Session 1: Institutional Change 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Kgotla 1 & 2

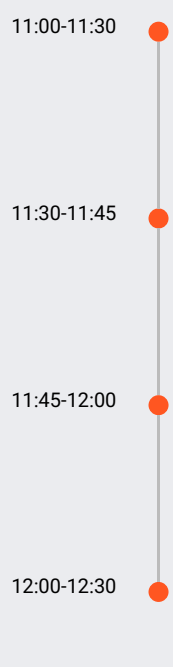
Chair: *Wendy Kilfoil*

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- 11:00-11:30** **Partner Sharing: Co-Creating Institutional Change for Student Success: The Inaugural Work of the Siyaphumelela 3.0 Student Success Committee at UWC**
Pather, S., Hassan, S. and Bok, Z.
University of the Western Cape
- 11:30-12:00** **Partner Sharing: Enhancing Student Success: Insights From the UJ's Rolling Fut of the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT)**
Graham, S.
University of Johannesburg
- 12:00-12:15** **Building Institutional Data Culture at UWC Through a Capacity Development Approach**
Booi, E.
University of the Western Cape
- 12:15-12:30** **Behind the Scenes of Success: A Reflective Qualitative Study of Administrative Lived Experience in the Siyaphumelela Project at UWC**
Oppel, T.
University of the Western Cape

Concurrent Session 2: Student Support 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Lethabo

Chair: *Ephraim Mhlanga*

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- 11:00-11:30** **Partner Sharing: A Data-informed Holistic Student Support Model at the University of Venda**
Mulaudzi, L.M.P., Hlabane, S., Nyete, L. and Tshililo, T.
University of Venda
- 11:30-11:45** **An Emic Perspective of Senior Student Experience at the University of the Free State**
Mahlatsi, B.
University of the Free State
- 11:45-12:00** **Click, Learn, Thrive: North West University's Self-Paced Academic Skills Workshops**
Koekemoer, R.
North-West University
- 12:00-12:30** **Amplifying Student Success through Social Media: The FLY@UP Case Study**
Jonker, T.
University of Pretoria

Concurrent Session 3: Student Voice 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Auditorium


Chair: *Bala Pillay*

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- 11:00-11:30 **Partner Sharing: Informing Institutional Quality and Employability**
Strydom, F. and Mabika, B.
University of the Free State
- 11:30-12:00 **Digital Transformation of Peer Tutoring Through Aligned Perspectives of Tutors and Tutees**
Mosikare, K.
Sol Plaatje University
- 12:00-12:15 **Addressing Gender Disparities in Mental Health Engagement: A Focus on Male Students at Durban University of Technology**
Mbatha, P. and Mjadu, S.
Durban University of Technology
- 12:15-12:30 **Application of student feedback to enhance learning and teaching in high priority service modules**
Maropola, M.
University of the Western Cape

Concurrent Session 4: Use of Data 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Lecture Room 6

Chair: *Alan Amory*

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- 11:00-11:30 **Partner Sharing: Advancing Education Through Data: The National Student Data Warehouse Initiative in South Africa**
Nazir, A., Mc Loughlin, K. and Saide
University of the Witwatersrand
- 11:30-12:00 **Partner Sharing: Co-Creating Ethical Practice: Developing a Framework for Student Data Use through Stakeholder Engagement**
Sithaldeen, R.
University of Cape Town
- 12:00-12:15 **A Risk-Management Approach to Understanding and Enhancing Student Well-being**
Du Toit, C. and Ribas, C.
North West University
- 12:15-12:30 **Crunching the Numbers to Improve Success Rates of First-Year Mathematics Students in Applied Sciences**
Joubert, E.D. and Mewalal, N.
Durban University of Technology

Concurrent Session 5: Teaching and Learning 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Lecture Room 8

Chair: *Maryla Bialobrzaska*

11:00-11:15

Partner Sharing: Bridging the Gap: The RULearning Toolkit Series as an Intervention Towards Students' Success

Kitchen, T. and Vorster, K.
Rhodes University

11:15-11:45

AI as the New Literacy: Preparing Students for an AI Fluent Future

Lee, A. and Morkel, J.
STADIO Higher Education

11:45-12:15

Can Eswatini Lead the Way in Generative AI Training for Educators?

Ferreira-Meyers, K. and Dunaway, M.
Institute of Distance Education, University of Eswatini

12:15-12:30

A Problem-Based Learning Initiative to Strengthen Mathematics Preservice Teachers' Professional Development: Bridging the Gap in content knowledge

Sibongile Zulu, Anele Xaba and Dlamini Vezubuhle
Durban University of Technology

Lunch 12:30 - 14:00

Venue: Injabulo

Concurrent Sessions 14:00 - 15:30

Concurrent Session 1: Teaching and Learning 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Kgotla 1 & 2

Chair: *Norman Duncan*

14:00-15:30

AI in Higher Education: Rethinking Student Success

Prof Anné Verhoef, Dr Mariette Fourie-Jardim, Dr Hanelie Adendorff
North-West University

Concurrent Session 2: Student Support 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Lethabo

Chair: *Ashton Maherry*

14:00-14:30

Digitally Empowered and Inclusive: Reimagining Student Success through UCT's Student Success Hub

Nzala, A., Malibongwe, A. and Manono, S.
University of Cape Town

14:30-15:00

Bridging the Gap: Equitable Performance of Extended Curriculum and Mainstream Medical Students at a South African University

Nyathi M, NJ Malaivusa, B Kubheka-Chauke, P Radebe
Sefako Makgatho health Sciences University

15:00-15:15

Fostering Collaborative Learning and Critical Thinking Through Writing Centre Group Tutorials

Khumalo, N. and Govender, N.
Durban University of Technology

15:15-15:30

Integrated Student Mental Health Support Model: Embedding Psychological Support in the Student Journey

Nomalungelo, N. and Khanyisa, Z.
Nelson Mandela University

Concurrent Session 3: Student Voice 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Auditorium

Chair: *Thea de Wet*

14:00-14:15

Partner Sharing: Incorporating Student Voice in Institutional Frameworks for Holistic and Equitable Student Success

Petersen, M. and Vilakazi, N.
Stellenbosch University

14:15-14:45

Let the Learners Speak: Using Student Voice to Shape Inclusive Teaching in STEM Access Education.

Belay, M.Z.
University of Pretoria

14:45-15:00

Co-creating With Students to Write a First-Year Guide

Taylor, D. and Gumbi, B.
University of Cape Town

15:00-15:30

Postgraduate Students Experiences of Access at Nelson Mandela University

Neale-Shutte, M. and Mbangezeli, S.
Nelson Mandela University

Concurrent Session 4: Use of Data 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Lecture Room 6

Chair: *Koo Parker*

14:00-14:30

Partner Sharing: Determining the indicators of student success at North-West University: Students' perspectives

Gore, O. & Louw, R.

North-West University

14:30-15:00

Beyond Retention: Mentorship Engagement as a Leading Indicator of Student Persistence in Higher Education

Richards, Z., Billings-Padiachey, A. and Andreas, L.

University of the Witwatersrand

15:00-15:30

From Insight to Impact: Translating Data Analytics into Targeted Academic Interventions in Engineering Education

Rawatlal, R.

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Concurrent Session 5: Institutional Change 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Lecture Room 8

Chair: *Alan Amory*

14:00-14:30

Partner Sharing: Every Success has a Beginning: Milestones on Walter Sisulu University Journey Towards Building a Coherent, Integrated and Intentional Student Success System

Mnengi-Gweva, D.

Walter Sisulu University

14:30-15:00

Partner Sharing: Data-driven Student Support Ecosystem and Transition Framework Integration

Sekonyela, L. and Nimy, E.

Sol Plaatje University

15:00-15:30

Partner Sharing: Driving Institutional Change: The Journey of the Central University of Technology

Malebo N.J., Nunes K.C., van Heerden L. and Khohliso X.D.

Central University of Technology, Free State

Refreshments and Network 15:30 - 16:00

Venue: Kgotla Foyer

Concurrent Sessions 16:00 - 18:00

Concurrent Session 1: Institutional Change 16:00 - 18:00

Venue: Kgotla 1 & 2

Chair: *Jenny Glennie*

16:00-18:00



Invited Imbizo: New Rules of AI in Student Success

Magiliozzi, A.

Mainstay

Concurrent Session 2: Student Support 16:00 - 18:00

Venue: Lethabo

Chair: *Wendy Kilfoil*

16:00-16:30



Partner Sharing: Data-Driven Institution-Wide Collaborative Intervention and Support

Cupido, X., Mkonto, N., Nakhooda, M., Farrar, T. and Masango, M.

Cape Peninsula University of technology

16:30-16:45



Innovating Student Support for Efficiency: The Early Implementation of the Departmental Digitalisation Strategy

Majozi, P.C., Gumede, T.M., Peterson, M. and Mbele, F.N.H.

University of Pretoria

16:45-17:15



Evidence to Action: The Transformative Power of Data and Coordinated Support in Driving Student Success

Khanye, G.W. and Mohoanyane, E.

University of the Free State

17:15-17:30



From Zero to Digital: Exploring the Learning Curve of University Students Using Computers for the First Time

Matete, K. and Mokoena, M.

Central University of Technology, Free State

17:30-17:45



Enhancing Digital Literacy Through a First-Year Orientation Programme at Nelson Mandela University

Mdiya, Z. and Pityana, R.

Nelson Mandela University

17:45-18:00



Integrated Student Mental Health Support Model: Embedding Psychological Support in the Student Journey


Nomalungelo, N. and Khanyisa, Z.

Nelson Mandela University

Concurrent Session 3: Teaching and Learning 16:00 - 18:00

Venue: Auditorium


Chair: *Ephraim Mhlanga*

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- 16:00-16:15 ● **Breaking the Silence: The Case for Effective Language Policies in Fostering Inclusion in a South African University**
Mgweba, C. and Molebatsi, P.
Walter Sisulu University
- 16:15-16:45 ● **A Comparative Study on Pre- and Post-COVID Class Attendance**
Meintjes, A. and Bernard, E.
University of the Free State
- 16:45-17:15 ● **Aligning Technology in Higher Education with Sustainable Development Goal 4: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions in a South African Context**
Sishi, K.K. and Ncube, T.R.
Durban University of Technology
- 17:15-17:30 ● **Bridging the Digital Divide: Advancing Technology-Enhanced Learning Pathways for Marketing and Retail Business Students at Vaal University of Technology (VUT)**
Samosamo, M., T Mohloai, T. and Chili M.M.
Vaal University of Technology
- 17:30-18:00 ● **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Frameworks Focused on Teaching and Learning for University Professionals**
Lelliott, T.
Saide

Concurrent Session 4: Student Voice 16:00 - 18:00

Venue: Lecture Room 6

Chair: *Bala Pillay*

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- 16:00-18:00 ● **Designing Equitable Higher Education: Students Co-Creating Institutional Change**
Gawie, B., Weaver, R., Britto, D., McMican, J. and Carpenter, F.I.
Achieving the Dream

Concurrent Session 5: Use of Data 16:00 - 18:00

Venue: Lecture Room 8

Chair: *Elizabeth Boo*

16:00-16:30	Partner Sharing: From Detection to Intervention: Using Programme Analytics and Student Population Balances to Improve Throughput <i>Chili, M.M., Mohloai, T., Samosamo, M. and Khoza, C.</i> Vaal University of Technology
16:30-17:00	Data-Driven Support for High Impact Modules: Module Reviews and Customised Reporting <i>Lemmens, J-C. and Janse van Vuuren, H.</i> University of Pretoria
17:00-17:15	Explainable AI for Student Success <i>Sekonyela, L. and Nimy, E.</i> Sol Plaatje University
17:15-17:30	Enhancing Student Support through Data-Driven Insights: VUT's Implementation of Anthology Illuminate <i>Tabane, M. and Rabapane, M.M.</i> Vaal University of Technology
17:30-18:00	Bridging Data and Action: Empowering Student Success Through Data and AI <i>Nzimande, N., Mambo, T., Ndlovu, S. and Letsholo, T.</i> University of South Africa
18:00-18:30	Unpacking the Gender Gap: Investigating Male Student Underperformance in South African Higher Education <i>Mamvura, I. and Makuapane, L.</i> University of Witwatersrand

Dinner for Invited Guests 18:30 - 21:00

Venue: Ndaba Palace

Registration 09:00 - 18:00

Venue: Kgotla Foyer



Invited Speaker
Chair: *Bill Moses*

Invited Imbizo: New Rules of AI in Student Success
Magiliozzi, A.
Mainstay

Invited Speakers
Chair: *Elizabeth Boo*

AI in Higher Education: Rethinking Student Success
Prof Anné Verhoef, Dr Mariette Fourie-Jardim, Dr Hanelie Adendorff
North-West University

2025 Siyaphumelela Scholar
Chair: *Ashton Maherry*

I Am Poem
Musa Bizani
North West University


Refreshments and Networking
Venue: Kgotla Foyer

Concurrent Sessions 11:00 - 12:30

Concurrent Session 1: Teaching and Learning 11:00 - 12:00

Venue: Kgotla 1 & 2


Chair: *Maryla Bialobrzeska*

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- 11:00-11:15 **Collaborative Staff Development for Student Success in Online Learning: Making Use of the Community of Inquiry Framework**
Van Rooyen, C., Vilakati, N. and Naidoo, K.
University of Johannesburg
- 11:15-11:30 **Demystifying Causal Factors for Student Performances in High-Priority Modules: A Longitudinal Analysis of Student Performance Trends**
Mbambo, S., Mbebe, F. and Khumalo, M.
Durban University of Technology
- 11:30-11:45 **Cultivating Student Prompt Engineering Skills through Collaborative OER Development**
Mdanyana, L. and Nontsonto, A.
Walter Sisulu University
- 11:45-12:15 **Impact of Innovative Teaching and Assessment Strategies on First-Year Student Assessment Outcomes**
Molokwane, S. and Pillay, S.
Durban University of Technology
- 12:15-12:30 **Fostering Holistic Success: Design Thinking and PBL in Engineering Education**
Rambharos, S. and Jeawon, R.
Durban University of Technology

Concurrent Session 2: Institutional Change 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Lethabo

Chair: *Ashton Maherry*

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- 11:00-12:30 **Unifying for Impact: Developing a University-wide Framework to Accelerate Student Success**
Sampson, K., Ogude, N., Moran, C., Rivera, G.M. and Kilfoil, W.
University of Canterbury

Concurrent Session 3: Student Voice 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Auditorium

Chair: *Norman Duncan*

11:00-11:15

Student Leadership for Student Success

October, H. and Langa, S.
Stellenbosch University

11:15-11:30

Reclaiming the Curriculum Through Dialog: Student Voice and Curriculum Co-creation for Inclusive and Just Higher Education

Matsie, R. and von Muellen, N.
North-West University

11:30-11:45

Reimagining Campus Food Systems: A Student-Led Call to Action for Equity and Academic Success

Nase, S.
Durban University of Technology

11:45-12:00

The Role of the Student Representative Council (SRC) in Integrating Student Services and Academic Support to Enhance Durban University of Technology Students

Ximba, S. and Nkosi, S.
Durban University of Technology

12:00-12:30


Reimagining Student-Staff Partnerships: A Theory of Change Approach to Social Justice in Higher Education

Mosienyane, T. and Cupido, X.
University of Cape Town

Concurrent Session 4: Use of Data 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Lecture Room 6

Chair: *Thea de Wet*

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- 11:00-11:30 **Partner Sharing: Mentorship That Matters: Leveraging Data to Improve Belonging, Engagement, and Retention**
Mathabathe, K., Gumede, T. and Israel, V.
University of Pretoria
- 11:30-12:00 **Partner Sharing: Leveraging Technology-Mediation for Early Identification of At-Risk Students and High-Impact Modules: An Academic Advising Case Study**
Khumalo, M. and Gaddiah, D.
Durban University of Technology
- 12:00-12:15 **From Data to Action: Enhancing Undergraduate Success at the University of Johannesburg**
Loots, R.C. and Meyer, A.
University of Johannesburg
- 12:15-12:30 **Harnessing Machine Learning to Improve First Year Student Success at DUT: A Siyaphumelela Data Working Group Initiative**
Ncube, T.
Durban University of Technology

Concurrent Session 5: Student Support 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Lecture Room 8

Chair: *Koo Parker*

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- 11:00-11:30 **Partner Sharing: Towards a MERL Model for Action Research: African Proverbs in Motion**
Ruffin, F. and Dlamini, N.
University of KwaZulu-Natal
- 11:30-11:45 **Partner Sharing: Unisa's Coaching Path: Navigating Success Together**
Rachidi, L., Sigwane, N., Febana, Z. and Mofokeng, T.
University of South Africa
- 11:45-12:15 **Partner Sharing: Siyaphumelela Supplemental Instruction (SI) Network Collaboration and Reflection**
Smith, L. and Ribane, M.
Nelson Mandela University
- 12:15-12:30 **Masculinity, Margins, and the Myth of Merit**
Khan, F., Madiba, M. and Makhetha, T.
University of the Western Cape

Lunch 12:30 - 14:00

Venue: Injabulo

Concurrent Sessions 1: Teaching and Learning and Beyond Completion 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Kgotla 1 & 2

Chair: *Alan Amory*

Teaching and Learning

14:00-14:15

Supporting the learning process in a language diverse classroom through self-directed learning, OER and peer assessments.

Olivier, C.

North-West University

14:15-14:30

Teaching for Food Security: A Review of How Students Learn Circular Economy in Agriculture

Aruwajoye, N.N. and Coetzee, R.

North-West University

14:30-14:45

The Role of Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Education in International Collaborative Learning: Insights from a COIL Entrepreneurship Project

Mbinda, B. and Maome, I.

Durban University of Technology

Beyond Completion

14:45 - 15:00

Invited Speaker

Siyaphumelela Student Success Indicator Dashboards and Reports for Institutional Leads from Partner Institutions.

Mbongi Ndlovu

IDSC

15:00-15:15

Bridging the Digital Divide: A Practical Advanced Excel Intervention to Empower Employability at Midlands TVET College

Maganyana, A. and Zinto, S.

Midlands TVET College

15:15-15:30

Fostering an Entrepreneurial Mindset for Advanced Diploma Students in Apparel Technology

Mavutha, W.

Durban University of Technology

Concurrent Session 2: Institutional Change 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Lethabo

Chair: *Koo Parker*

14:00-15:30

Bridging the Gender Gap: Academic Success and Employability in Higher Education

Strydom, J.F., Meintjes, A. and Duncan, N.

University of the Free State

Concurrent Session 3: Teaching and Learning 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Lethabo


Chair: *Maryla Bialobrzeska*

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- 14:00-14:15 **Share2Teach: A Collaborative OER Platform for Equitable, Self-Directed Learning in South Africa**
Laubscher, D. and Bosch, C.
North-West University
- 14:15-14:30 **Reality Check: Introducing Virtual Reality into Higher Education Health Care Sciences to Improve Student Learning**
Venter, E. and Hambrook, H.
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
- 14:30-14:45 **Supporting Academic Staff in Digital Curriculum Transformation: A Practice-Based Approach**
Mashiteng, E.
University of KwaZulu-Natal
- 14:45-15:00 **Reimagining Student Success and Expanding Opportunity for All Through the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC)**
Zikalala-Mabope, L.A., Mosiane, T., Poka, M.S. and Mncwangi, N.P.
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
- 15:00-15:30 **Reimagining Mentorship in Teacher Education Through Participatory Action Research: Towards a Digitally Responsive Framework**
Jiyane, L.
University of Mpumalanga

Concurrent Session 4: Use of Data 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Lecture Room 6


Chair: *Norman Duncan*

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- 14:00-14:30 **Beyond the Red Flags: Predicting Student Success with Data-Driven Insights**
Mafunganyika-Ndlovu, A. and Mamvura, I.
University of the Witwatersrand
- 14:30-14:45 **Impact of Increasing NSC Maths on Depth of Learning in Mathematics**
Ballim, Y. and Mamvura, I.
University of the Witwatersrand
- 14:45-15:15 **Reconceptualising Module Importance: A Data-driven, Collaborative Framework for Identifying High-Priority Modules**
Van der Merwe, T. and Posthumus, R.
University of the Free State
- 15:15-15:30 **Overview of the Early Alert System: Impact on Student Success**
Adamiak, J. and Rachidi, L.
University of South Africa

Concurrent Session 5: Student Support 14:00 - 15:30

Venue: Lecture Room 8

Chair: *Nthabiseng Ogude*

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- 14:00-14:15 **Pioneering Digital Mental Health Support in Higher Education: The Funda Module at Nelson Mandela University**
Gradidge, D. and Kama, T.
Nelson Mandela University
- 14:15-14:30 **Not Comfortable at All: Insights from a Pre-Orientation Module Aiming to Navigate Digital Disadvantage**
Byles, H.
University of Pretoria
- 14:30-15:00 **Mentoring for Success: Improving Students' Academic Performance and Employability Through Holistic Support**
Hatch, M.
University of KwaZulu-Natal
- 15:00-15:15 **Parental Engagement as a Redress Strategy for Success: Lessons from the Pre-University Academy**
Leshota, M.
Pre-University Academy, University of Pretoria
- 15:15-15:30 **Peer Advising as a Catalyst for Equity and Success in the Road to Success Programme**
Maleswena, T., Nayager, A. and Shungube, M.
University of the Witwatersrand

Refreshments and Network 15:30 - 16:00


Venue: Kgotla Foyer

Concurrent Sessions 16:00 - 18:00

Concurrent Session 2: Student Support 16:00 - 18:00

Venue: Lethabo


Chair: *Ephraim Mhlanga*

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- 16:00-16:15 **The Impact of High School Mathematics Pathways on First-Year University Performance: A South African Case Study**
Kone, N.B.
University of Johannesburg
- 16:15-16:30 **The Potential of Diagnostic Tests to Inform Targeted Student Success Interventions**
Rathilal, S., Mbambo, S. and Rambharos, S.
Durban University of Technology
- 16:30-16:45 **Spatiotemporal Analysis of National Senior Certificate Results: Implications for Higher Education Recruitment**
Nzimeni, S.
University of the Free State
- 16:45-17:15 **The Analytical Advantage: Transforming Academic Support Through Data-driven Decision Making.**
Mohoanyane, W. and Mbonani, T.
University of the Free State
- 17:15-17:45 **Scaling Evaluation of Teaching: Leveraging Microsoft Forms, Power BI, and Power Automate for Impact**
Rabotapi, T.
Walter Sisulu University
- 17:45-18:00 **Reflecting on FIDBAK APP in Data Collection of Tutorial Attendance Through the Lens of CHAT: Towards Responsive Use of Technology**
Mphanda, E., Majozi, B., Gumede, T. and Nsibande, R.
University of Pretoria

Concurrent Session 3a: Institutional Change 16:00 - 16:30

Venue: Auditorium


Chair: *Thea de Wet*

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- 16:00-16:15 **Reimagining Student Success: A Literature Review of South African Research**
Parker, K., Lelliott, T. and Maherry, A.
Saide
- 16:15-16:30 **Building Institutional Literacy in Students Through a User-Centred Support Portal**
August, L.
University of Cape Town

Concurrent Session 3b: Student Support 16:30 - 18:00

Venue: Auditorium


Chair: *Bala Pillay*

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- 16:30-16:45 **Ulwaluko Kwa Xhosa (Xhosa male initiation) and the Reimagining of Positive Masculinities: Cultural Capital as a Resource for Academic and Personal Success in Higher Education**
Siswana, A.
University of the Witwatersrand
- 16:45-17:00 **A Learning Ecosystem - Living and Learning Communities**
January, C.
University of Cape Town
- 17:00-17:15 **Using Innovative Strategies to Support Second-Year Students**
Seane, L.
Sol Plaatje University
- 17:15-17:30 **The Nexus of Community and Individual Action in Peer Mentoring: Towards Epistemological Becoming**
Ndabula, Y. and van der Poel, N.
Rhodes University
- 17:30-17:45 **The Impact of Virtual Mentoring on the Wellbeing of Students: A Case Study of Central University of Technology, Free State**
Joannou, N.
Central University of Technology, Free State
- 17:45-18:00 **Undergraduate Male Students' Academic Experiences at a South African Higher Education Institution: An Ecological Systems Analysis**
Maluleke, T., Mochochoko, V., Moosa, R., Tshuma, L., Siswana, A. and Innocent Mamvura, I.
University of the Witwatersrand

Concurrent Session 4: Institutional Change 16:00 - 18:30

Venue: Lecture Room 6

Chair: *Elizabeth Boo*

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- 16:00-18:00 **A Collective Impact Approach to Student Success: Western Cape Siyaphumelela Regional Network**
Sithaldeen, R., Cupido, X., Nakhooda, M. and Boo, E.
University of Cape Town

Concurrent Session 5: Student Support 16:00 - 18:00

Venue: Lecture Room 8

Chair: *Nthabiseng Ogude*

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- 16:15-16:30 **Smart Marking for TAs: Building Capacity for Ethical, Consistent Marking in a Hybrid Institution**
Mathibedi, F. and Barry, G.
University of Pretoria
- 16:30-16:45 **Systematic Support: A Data-Informed Approach to Academic Advising through the Phafoga Project**
November N. and Majozi P.C.
University of Pretoria
- 16:45-17:00 **Reimagining Academic Recovery: Reflections from At-Risk Students on the Role of Academic Advising**
Manatsa, I., Kalanga, T., Mavela, N. and Makondo, L.
Durban University of Technology
- 17:00-17:15 **Supplementing the Curriculum: The Impact of Structured Co-Curricular Programmes on Academic Achievement in Living and Learning Communities**
Twala, R. and Khumalo, M.
Durban University of Technology
- 17:15-17:30 **The Impact of First-Year Student Orientation Programmes on Student Performance: An Investigation on Student Success**
Thamsanqa, H.
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
- 17:30-17:45 **Intersectional Insights into Performance and Aspirations in a Pre-University Academy STEM Programme**
Moodley, V.
University of Pretoria
- 17:45-18:00 **Efficacy of the Mentorship Programme for First Year Students at a Health Sciences University in South Africa**
Sekgobela, M.J.
Sefako Makgatho Health Science University

Cocktail Function for All 18:00 - 21:00

Venue: Kgotla 1 & 2

Registration 09:00 - 12:00

Venue: Kgotla Foyer

09:00 - 09:20

2025 Siyaphumelela Scholar

Chair: *Ashton Maherry*

I Am Poem

Bulela Limba

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Mbali Zondo

University of the Witwatersrand

Best Paper Presentation 09:20 - 09:50

Chair: *Innocent Nkata*

09:20-09:50

The First-Year Experience at the University of KwaZulu-Natal: Scaling Equity-Centred High-Impact Practices

Bux, R., Ngubane, P.P., Hoskins, R. and Rama, S.

University of KwaZulu-Natal

09:50 - 10:30

Siyaphumelela Scholars Panel Discussion

Chair: *Ashton Maherry and Ephraim Mhlanga*

Musa Bizani

North West University

Zoe Bok

University of the Western Cape

Bradley Gawie

Central University of Technology

Blessing Gumbu

University of Cape Town

Bulela Limba

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Sibahle Mabaso

University of the Free State

Mbali Zondo

University of the Witwatersrand

11:00 - 12:00

Building Siyaphumelela Collaboratively: Key Elements

Chair: *Jenny Glennie*

Gugu Khanye

University of the Free State

Lis Lange

Stellenbosch University

Matete Madiba

The University Of the Western Cape

Nthabiseng Ogude

Affiliated to University of Canterbury

Francois Strydom

University of the Free State

12:00 - 12:30

Closing Remarks

Bill Moses

The Kresge Foundation

Innocent Nkata

Saide

12:30

Packed Lunch and Departure

Notes



About Siyaphumelela

The *Siyaphumelela* ("We Succeed") Initiative seeks to broaden evidence-based strategies for post secondary student success in South Africa. Launched in 2014 with funding from the *Kresge Foundation*, the initiative is led by *Saide* and draws on insights from global student success innovators like the *University Innovation Alliance* and *Achieving the Dream*.

In 2019, with additional funding support from the *Kresge Foundation*, *Saide* launched *Siyaphumelela Network 2.0*. By 2022, 17 South African public higher education institutions had joined the network. The current phase, *Siyaphumelela Network 3.0*, was launched in June 2024. A total of 20 institutions were admitted as members of the network, representing 20 out of 26 public universities in South Africa. These 20 institutions receive grant funding from the *Kresge Foundation* to accelerate and embed their student success efforts.

About Saide

Established in 1992, *Saide* is an education support organisation founded on social justice and open learning principles. We believe that education is the foundation for lifelong success. As such, we are on a mission to unlock the power of education and expand opportunity for children, youth and adults across Africa.

Innovating data-informed solutions and leveraging technology, *Saide* supports education providers across diverse modes of provision (in-person, remote and hybrid), partnering with governments, public and private institutions, as well as civil society organisations. We work across the education system from early learning through primary and secondary schooling, to higher education and training.

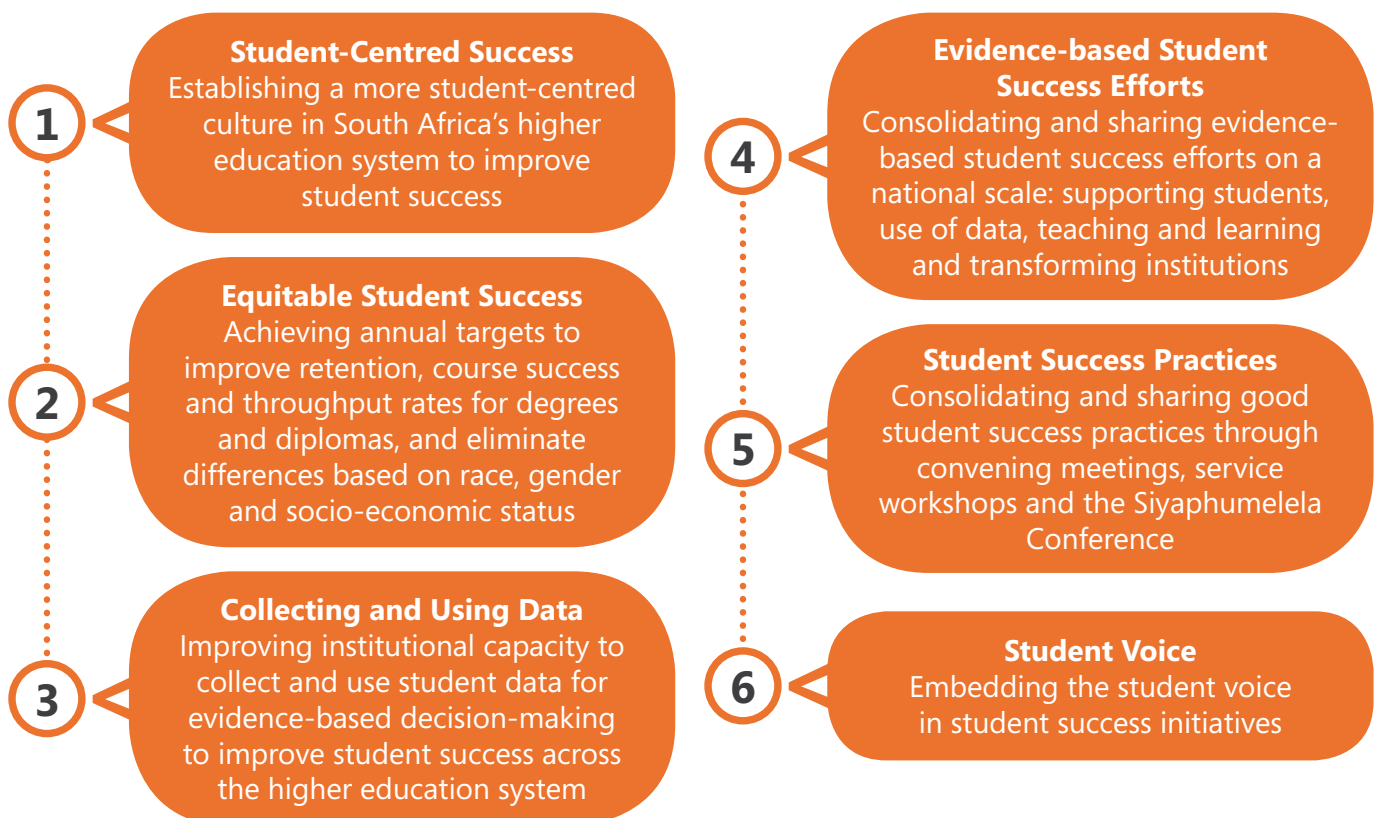
What we do

We transform institutions

The design and development of *Siyaphumelela 3.0* builds on the solid foundation of *Siyaphumelela 1.0* and 2.0 incorporating insights gained from an analysis of partner reports and lessons learned.

As we transition into *Siyaphumelela 3.0*, our commitment remains focused on fostering enhancing student success and, in particular, on actively involving executive leadership from newer institutions in the network, ensuring their full support for the *Siyaphumelela* initiative within their respective institutions. Two further focus areas include the need to strengthen learning and teaching efforts and concerns about graduate employability.

Additionally, the *Siyaphumelela Network 3.0* aims to further develop and enhance the objectives established in the first two phases of the *Siyaphumelela Initiative*. These objectives focus on collaborative efforts to promote equity in South African higher education by:



Siyaphumelela Network 3.0 Objectives

Impact

Impact through collaboration





Funders

THE
KRESGE
FOUNDATION

Implementing Partners



Contact

Contact info@siyaphumelela.org.za or visit
www.siyaphumelela.org.za to find out more.

Siyaphumelela Conference 2025

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