

FACULTY NEWSLETTER

ENGINEERING & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



I am pleased to share some faculty news and exceptional highlights within EBE from the second quarter of the year.

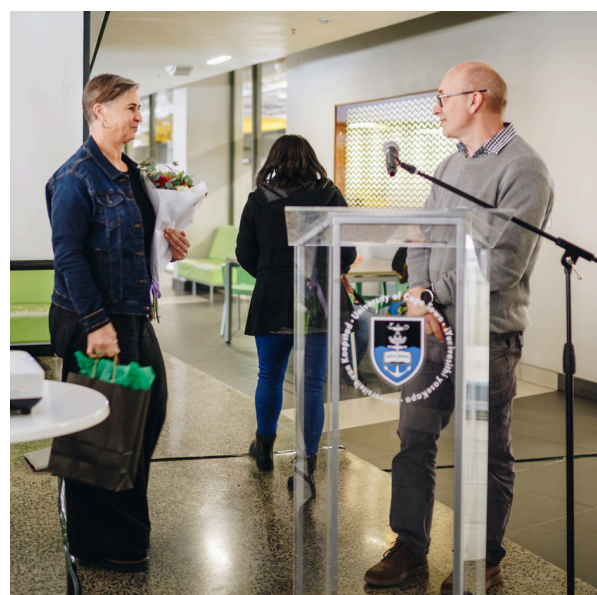
We acknowledge colleagues such as DVC Prof Brandon Collier-Reed, being elected as a Fellow of the South African Academy of Engineering, and Dr Kathryn Ewing, being awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Social Responsiveness Award. She was recognised for her valuable contribution made to research, advocacy and practice of urban design and architecture in Southern Africa, as well as her commitment to improving the quality of life and safety of marginalised communities in Cape Town. This reflects our faculty's commitment to both teaching and learning, as well as social responsiveness.

We also recognised our students through the annual Student Awards Evening, celebrating the outstanding achievements of the 2024 cohort, as well as the Dean's Merit List campaign.

I want to thank all staff for their continued support, collaboration, and shared accomplishments. It has been an honour to lead the Faculty over the past 10 years. I warmly welcome Professor Aubrey Mainza, who will assume the role of Dean on 1 August 2025.

DEAN'S FAREWELL EVENT

The Faculty hosted a farewell event for outgoing Dean, Prof Alison Lewis, attended by faculty staff, family, and friends.



DEAN'S FAREWELL EVENT



APPOINTMENT OF NEW EBE DEAN



The Faculty is pleased to welcome Professor Aubrey Mainza, appointed as the Dean of EBE effective 1 August 2025.

Professor Mainza has held several leadership roles within the faculty, including serving as Head of the Department of Chemical Engineering from 2019 to 2023.

With his experience in higher education and leadership we are confident that he will continue to build on the excellent work of the faculty look forward to his contributions in guiding the faculty toward ongoing growth and innovation.

STAFF WELCOMES

- **Dr Brandon Weber** joined the Centre for Bioprocess Engineering Research as Director.
- **Ms Deslynne Davids** joined the Centre for Minerals Research (CMR) as Administrative & Finance Coordinator.
- **Ms Lara Chapman** joined the Centre for Minerals Research (CMR) as Laboratory Manager
- **Mr Jhono Bennett** joined the School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics as Senior Lecturer.
- **Ms Ayesha Mollagee** joined the Faculty Office as administrative assistant. .

STAFF FAREWELLS

- **Dr Krystal Ontong** left the Department of Construction Economics and Management.

EBE Winter Social Staff Soup Day Event

The Faculty hosted its annual Winter Social Staff Soup Day. It was a great opportunity for staff to build connections among colleagues during the second semester.



AWARDS AND HONOURS

Dr Kathryn Ewing awarded the 2024 Vice Chancellor's Social Responsiveness Award



Dr Kathryn Ewing, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics (APG) was awarded the UCT Vice-Chancellor's Social Responsiveness Award for 2024.

She was recognised for her valuable contribution made to research, advocacy and practice of urban design and architecture in Southern Africa, as well as her commitment to improving the quality of life and safety of marginalised communities in Cape Town. Ewing's approach to social responsiveness scholarship and pedagogy is built from over twenty years of participatory spatial research and experience as a co-founding director of Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading Non-profit Company from 2013 to 2023.

Ewing's transformative Southern practice integrates a taught interdisciplinary design studio, Studio Hope Gugulethu, and a small design-build public space project iThemba Walkway, situated within a larger research initiative The Walkway Project.

Prof Brandon Collier-Reed elected as a Fellow of the South African Academy of Engineering



Congratulations to Prof Brandon Collier-Reed, UCT DVC: Teaching and Learning, on being elected as a Fellow of the South African Academy of Engineering (SAAE).

He was elected in well-deserved recognition of his outstanding engineering achievements over the years.

IN THE NEWS



Reimagining sustainable African urban futures through unlearning and innovation

As African cities experience unprecedented growth, are traditional models of academic understanding and governance fundamentally failing to grasp the innovative solutions being forged by ordinary citizens and informal actors? Does the future of urbanisation in Africa lie in embracing the ingenuity that thrives outside formal structures? These were just some of the questions emerging from UCT's Collective Conversations: On Science for Society.

[Read more](#)



UCT breaks ground on flagship Green Precinct

A unique aspect of the Green Precinct is its dual role as both infrastructure and learning environment. In partnership with UCT's Future Water Institute, the site will serve as a living laboratory for water management research, teaching and innovation. Plans include an interpretative centre and landscaped gardens where students and researchers can engage directly with ecological systems and sustainability technologies.

[Read more](#)

Teaching and Learning in the Age of AI – Focus on EBE Geomatics



In this episode of The Learning Exchange podcast, Head of Online Education and Course Curriculum Design at UCT, Nawaal Deane is joined by Prof Jenny Whittal from the Division of Geomatics in the School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics, and Melissa Akoue Mve, a professional surveyor and postgraduate student.

Together, they explore how AI is being integrated into teaching, research and practice in the field of geomatics. From critical questions about the ethical use of AI in education, to reflections on industry expectations and future-proofing curricula, this conversation opens a timely dialogue on what it means to teach and learn, in a world where generative AI is fast becoming a foundational tool.

[Watch the episode here.](#)

FACULTY NEWS

How geomatics, legal pluralism, and history shape SA's land justice future



Prof Jennifer Whittal delivered her inaugural lecture on how colonial boundaries continue to define land administration and social equity.

Professor Jennifer Whittal's personal and professional journey mirrors the evolving landscape of land justice in South Africa. Having first walked the University of Cape Town's (UCT) upper campus as an undergraduate 35 years ago, the university has been a constant thread through her life – as a student, researcher, teacher, and mother.

But her inaugural lecture on 3 June was not just an academic exercise but a deeply personal reflection on how land boundaries – both literal and conceptual – shape identity, power, and opportunity. Titled “Beyond Boundaries” and attracting a large audience of students, academics and members of the public, the lecture wove together centuries of colonial legacy, cutting-edge technology, and African legal pluralism to illuminate the complex realities that continue to define land administration and social equity today.

Using a rich tapestry of historical documents, geographic information systems (GIS), and fieldwork, Professor Whittal traced the origins of Cape Town's southern suburbs back to the 17th century. Remarkably, some of the original land boundaries, beacons, and survey marks laid down by early Dutch settlers like Pieter Potter remain intact today. One such beacon, known as “Beacon F”, rests at the corner of a wall and a tree, silently marking a boundary set over 350 years ago.

These ancient markers and the meticulous hand-drawn maps they inspired reveal much more than property lines. They tell a story of exclusion, colonial conquest, and the erasure of indigenous land rights.

[Read more.](#)

FACULTY NEWS

Transforming Energy Access - Learning Partnership

Housed at the University of Cape Town, the [Transforming Energy Access – Learning Partnership \(TEA-LP\)](#) is a multi-institutional initiative focused on building capacity for inclusive, sustainable energy access in underserved regions, particularly across Africa and the Global South. Through curriculum development, training, and collaboration across a growing network of energy expertise, TEA-LP supports the delivery of high-quality postgraduate programmes that equip graduates with the interdisciplinary skills needed to design, implement, and manage decentralised energy solutions. UCT supports partner university curriculum development and hosts our innovative Continued Professional Development courses.

In the context of engineering and the built environment, TEA-LP plays a critical role in bridging the gap between technical knowledge and real-world application. As energy becomes increasingly integrated into the design and operation of buildings, infrastructure, and urban systems, engineers must consider not only performance and cost, but also sustainability, circularity, equity, and resilience. TEA-LP's focus on decentralised, renewable energy aligns with this evolving landscape—preparing professionals who can address both the technical and social dimensions of energy systems in diverse environments.

By embedding circular economy principles, systems thinking, and local context into energy education, TEA-LP enhances the ability of engineers and built environment professionals to contribute to just and climate-resilient development. It also fosters collaboration across disciplines such as policy, finance, and environmental planning, which are essential for delivering integrated and lasting energy solutions.



Pictured here are attendees at one of the TEA-LP training workshops. The TEA-LP Mini-Grids Training Workshop, held in Kigali in 2024, brought together 49 participants, including 42 lecturers from 22 partner institutions across 16 countries. Source: TEA-LP

FACULTY EVENTS

EBE Student Awards Evening

The annual EBE Student Awards Evening took place in May and acknowledged outstanding students from the 2024 academic year. Various faculty student prizes and awards were presented. Congratulations to all the award recipients.



DEAN'S MERIT LIST CAMPAIGN

The annual Dean's Merit List (DML) campaign celebrating 1st, 2nd, and 3rd-year students who made the Dean's Merit List for the 2024 academic year. The campaign involved sending congratulatory emails to recipients and inviting them to collect limited-edition branded merchandise on specified days as a token of appreciation.

This year, we had a 74% take-up rate, compared to 53% last year.



Community impact: EBE departments making a difference

MechEngCares

The Department of Mechanical Engineering extends a heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated to their #MecEngCares drive for the flood victims in the Western Cape. Every contribution, no matter how small, helps bring comfort and relief to families in need.

The donation was delivered to the Wynberg Fire Department who will ensure the items reach those most affected.



STUDENT NEWS

Entrepreneurship Intersivity 2025 competition

Mechanical Engineering Master's student, Timothy Reddy, supervised by A/Prof Lukas Du Plessis, pitched his start start-up company, Worldwide Optimum Engineering (WOE), in the UCT Entrepreneurship Intersivity 2025 Competition.

He successfully progressed to the regional round of the competition. He is one of only two research-based start-ups progressing to the next round of the Entrepreneurship Intersivity 2025 competition.



Pictured here are A/Prof Lukas Du Plessis and Timothy Reddy.