



**SARIMA**

# 2025 SARIMA CONFERENCE

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## ABSTRACT BOOK

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# ABSTRACT — INFORMATION

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# ORAL Abstracts:

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## — A research management collaboration framework to achieve greater research outputs, and meaningful societal impact

**Ms Christine Aitana**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), Windhoek, Namibia

### **Biography:**

Ms. Aitana is an Administrator and Accounting Assistant in the Directorate of Research and Innovation and Partnerships at Namibia University of Science and Technology, in Windhoek, Namibia. She holds a Master of Business Administration in Entrepreneurship and her research interests are in entrepreneurship, small and medium enterprises development, as well as postgraduate research management and innovation.

Expanding global challenges and day to day societal dilemmas require high level and impactful applied research, innovative solutions, technology, and products and services to mitigate them. Additionally, challenges such as climate change, global warming, health problems, food shortages, poverty, etc., demand the involvement of all stakeholders to collaborate in the development of practical, creative, innovative, and lasting solutions. However, collaboration between various stakeholders in research management has proven to be a complex, and a daunting experience in most cases, leading to poor achievement of projects objectives, and less impactful research outputs. Therefore, strategic collaborations, and a common vision and objectives between key stakeholders such as researchers, research managers and administrators, funding institutions, specific research beneficiaries, and the society at large is of utmost importance to the successful implementation of research activities. This submission, therefore aims to (1) presents lessons learned from collaborative research management project (SASSCAL Graduate Studies Programme in Integrated Water Resources Management) from Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), and (2) present a proposed research management collaboration framework to achieve greater research outputs and meaningful societal impact. The framework aims to provide the research management society with best collaborative practices, strategies, and tips, tapping from the lessons learned, and research evidence.



## — Strategies to navigate disruption in the research management environment: A case of University of Ghana

**Mrs Amma Afumwaa Appah**<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Beatrice Sakyibea Biney-Nyamekye<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

### **Biography:**

Amma Afumwaa Appah is a Research Development Officer and Research Management Professional (RMP). She is an IREX Fellow of the University Administration Support Program with focus on research management and administration funded by CANEGIE.

As a research administrator she has had the opportunity to work in the areas of capacity development, research publication and dissemination, grants administration and funded projects management. She currently leads the Capacity Development Team at the Research and Innovation Directorate, University of Ghana with responsibilities for developing and implementing programs to build the capacity of staff, faculty and graduate students.

Disruptions are inherent in all spheres of life, often affecting planned activities and creating disarray. However, such disruptions can also serve as opportunities for strategizing and restructuring. The COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies a significant global disruption that necessitated rapid adaptation across various sectors. Recently, funding cuts from the US have emerged as another disruption impacting research institutions. This study aims to explore how the University of Ghana, characterized by a fragile research management environment, has navigated these disruptions to maintain its relevance in the research sector. The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyze the strategies employed by the University of Ghana to enhance its research management environment in response to disruptions and challenges.

This research will employ a qualitative case study approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the research management sector at the University of Ghana. Additionally, document analysis of institutional policies and strategic plans will be conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies implemented. The study will be grounded in the Adaptive Systems Theory, which emphasizes the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in organizational structures during periods of disruption. This theory will guide the analysis of how the University of Ghana has adapted its research management practices in response to external challenges.

This research is significant as it will provide insights into effective strategies for navigating disruptions in the research management environment, contributing to the broader discourse on resilience, adaptability and sustainability in higher education institutions. The findings will not only benefit the University of Ghana but also serve as a valuable resource for other institutions facing similar challenges, fostering a culture of innovation and strategic planning in research management.

**Keywords:** Research Management Environment, Disruption, Strategic Activities, Adaptive Systems Theory.

## — Developing an efficient and responsive postgraduate students' research management system towards enhanced institutional throughput

**Prof Omotayo Awofolu**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Anna Matros-Goreses<sup>1</sup>, Ms Rennie Munyayi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia, <sup>2</sup>Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia

### **Biography:**

Prof Omotayo Awofolu is an academic and research manager at the Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek. He currently serves as the Acting Director of Research and Postgraduate Development. He has published widely with over 1,200 citations, reflecting his significant contributions to knowledge. In his administratively, he is dedicated to advancing research excellence and fostering postgraduate development. He plays a pivotal role in promoting Integrated Water Resources Management education and research in the Southern African region. His leadership and scholarly work continue to positively impact the higher education landscape, both in Namibia and internationally.

Ensuring an efficient and seamless process of monitoring the progress of postgraduate students has been a daunting task for many Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). Student throughput is one of the major factors through which HEIs, including the Namibia University of Science and Technology, are assessed in terms of performance, relevance and ranking. However, the research management process is dynamic and fluid, presenting evolving challenges that may disrupt the achievement of institutional research strategic objectives. These challenges require the prompt application of responsive and adaptive management strategies to achieve institutional research goals. By examining the theoretical framework and relevant principles of agile methodologies, this paper assesses major approaches through which factors contributing to the disruption of the institutional postgraduate research management process can be navigated. Key principles such as digital transformation, risk mitigation, iterative planning, and collaborative supervision are explored to achieve a streamlined knowledge management system and optimal postgraduate students' throughput outcome.

**Keywords:** Student Throughput, HEIs, Research Management, Strategic Objectives, Framework

**Scope of paper:** The presentation will cover the research management process at NUST, examine key challenges concerning students' throughputs, and propose solutions through the application of the agile framework.

**Benefit:** The audience will be able to assess and relate the outcomes of the presentation to their current scenario with a view of potential improvement in their system.

## — Research information management as a cornerstone of strategic decision-making

**Mr Harry Maishe Bopape**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Harry Maishe Bopape is a physics and mathematics scientist who has completed a science degree in the subjects. He holds a postgraduate Diploma in Datametrics, a majoring in Information Technology and Decision Modeling, and a master's degree in business leadership (MBL) in Strategic Management. He completed a Diploma in Strategy Execution from Harvard Business School.

Maishe Bopape is currently a Director of Research Support at UNISA, where he is responsible for the operational execution and implementation of the Research Strategy when it pertains to the support and facilitation of research at UNISA. Creating an enabling Research environment at UNISA.

In today's dynamic research landscape, the exponential growth of data necessitates robust strategies for effective decision-making. Research Information Management (RIM) serves as a cornerstone in navigating the complexities of evolving research environments by integrating best practices, leveraging technological advancements, and optimizing strategic approaches for institutional success. A well-structured RIM system acts as a centralized source of truth, enabling stakeholders to streamline research management, enhance collaboration, and improve data-driven decision-making. Without such a platform, institutions risk fragmentation, inefficiencies, and challenges in maintaining research integrity and oversight. RIM empowers institutions to respond proactively to change, develop strategic policies, and foster innovation within the academic landscape by utilizing machine learning algorithms; institutions can extract actionable insights from complex datasets, enhancing research impact and operational efficiency. This presentation argues that RIM is fundamental to strategic decision-making and presents a case study of a mega-university to illustrate how it strengthens institutional competitiveness and shapes the future of research management. The presentation will further demonstrate how RIM serves as a foundation for effective research governance, strategic planning, and institutional success. The mega-university case study will provide practical insights into how RIM functions as a strategic tool.

## — Measuring commercial maturity: Capturing the complexity of commercialisation readiness at an institutional level

**Dr Ezekiel Onoshe Boro**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Becky Jones-Phillips<sup>1</sup>, Dr Chris Peters<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Liverpool, United Kingdom

### **Biography:**

Head of the Innovation Capacity Strengthening Programme at LSTM, with a medical degree and MSc in Global Health. My expertise spans innovation capacity strengthening, entrepreneurship, business development, strategy development and management, programme management, and healthcare service delivery. I have 10 years of experience and have worked with global organizations like FIND, MSF, Market Access Africa advancing access to health technologies in LMICs.

This interactive session will provide SARIMA members and conference attendees an opportunity to learn about and use the Commercialisation Maturity Level Index (CMLI) assessment tool developed by the Framework for Leveraging Innovation in Global Health Technology (FLIGHT) project team. FLIGHT is a Research England Connecting Capability Fund supported collaboration between three UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Brighton and Sussex Medical School, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

The FLIGHT project aims to develop an Innovation and Enterprise Framework for commercialising, accelerating and converting HEI translational research into deployable public health assets. Part of this project includes the development of the CMLI, a method of assessing the institutional capacity and capability for commercialisation, which can provide insight into areas of improvement, as well as providing confidence to external partners. Unlike existing measures and frameworks which look at individual technologies or innovations, the CMLI will encompass this as well as the infrastructure in place within an institution that enables the progress of individual projects through a commercialisation pipeline.

The HEI sector in Africa is arguably ineffective at translating ideation and early-stage R & D through to commercially viable products that can contribute significantly to the African economy in many countries. The FLIGHT project aims to help alleviate this disconnect by providing a tool for HEIs to self-audit their commercialisation capabilities, and make improvements and efficiency savings where necessary.

Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from the FLIGHT team who have developed the CMLI tool, and what learnings/actions this has resulted in.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to assess their own institutions using the CMLI tool, providing insights into areas of strength and opportunities for further refinement of the tool.

## — The dynamics of establishing a research support office at a resource limited - Emerging University

**Dr Kondwani Chidziwisano**<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Lucy Moyo<sup>1</sup>, Mr George Sinjani<sup>1</sup>, Dr Limbanazo Matandika<sup>1</sup>, Mr Livison Msonthi<sup>1</sup>, Dr Madalitso Tsakama<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

Dr. Kondwani Chidziwisano is a WASHTED Research Centre Manager at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences; and he is a Public and Environmental Health professional. He is the Coordinator for the Research Support Office at the institution. Kondwani has vast experience in Research designs, implementation and evaluation. Thus, he has leveraged his experience in supporting the Research Support Office in various issues including Grants management, Contracts management, Research Ethics and operation of the Research Support Office.

**Introduction:** The Research Support Office (RSO) is vital in ensuring that research is conducted smoothly, ethically, and in compliance with all necessary regulations and funding requirements. It is a unifying factor between researchers and the various external and internal stakeholders involved in the research process. With support from the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA), the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) has established a Research Support Office for easy management and coordination of research activities. This abstract present the approach and methodology used in establishing the RSO. Such information is crucial for small scale and newly established Universities that are planning to establish similar arrangements.

**The approach:** Through the Department of Research and Innovation, MUBAS management came up with a task-force to establish the RSO. With internal arrangements, space for the RSO was identified and furniture provided; Standard Operating Procedures were developed and staff deployed. With the help of SARIMA, a Research Support Officer was hired to coordinate daily activities of the RSO. A MUBAS research repository and Internal Grants Management System are some of the outputs realised from the newly established RSO. However, for all this to happen, it requires coordination and commitment of different offices including provision of human, technical and financial resources.

**Lessons learnt from the process:** This abstract will provide in detail the lessons learnt from the establishment of the RSO.

**Challenges encountered:** This abstract will provide in detail the challenges encountered, and how they were addressed in the process of establishing the RSO.

**Conclusion:** Establishment of a RSO in a limited resource and small-scale institution is possible; however, it requires concerted efforts from various players including proper planning and step by step implementation process. Importantly, external technical support is essential for successful realisation of this noble goal.



## — Rethinking collaboration in research management: Adapting to global challenges

**Ms Kimberly Cornfield<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Andreja Zulim de Swarte**

<sup>1</sup>University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana

### **Biography:**

Kimberly Cornfield is the Director of Research at the University of Botswana, with over 15 years of experience in developing innovative services, strategic partnerships, and securing funding for world-leading research. Previously at University College London (UCL), she played a key role in raising over €550 million in European Union funding to support research and innovation. Kimberly has built extensive global networks across academia, industry, investors, governments, and non-profit organisations. Her work focuses on fostering collaboration, advancing research strategy, and driving impactful innovation to address complex global challenges across multiple sectors.

In an era of political volatility, economic shifts, and shifting geopolitical priorities, research and innovation (R&I) agendas are undergoing major transformations. Research Management and Administration (RMA) professionals play a crucial role in navigating these transitions. This panel brings together experts to explore how R&I management is evolving and the strategies needed for organisations and countries to thrive.

The discussion will address the impact of funding cuts, geopolitical developments—including lessons from Brexit and US federal funding shifts—and political changes on research agendas. Brexit underscored the importance of resilience in managing cross-border collaborations, emphasising trust-based relationships to advance research amidst uncertainty. These lessons offer valuable insights for US and international partners navigating evolving federal funding landscapes.

The panel will examine how RMAs can foster positive outcomes despite political challenges. Key themes include the role of global networks like SARIMA in enabling transnational collaboration and knowledge sharing. The discussion will emphasise building relationships through consistent communication, equitable resource sharing, and aligned institutional goals to sustain research excellence.

Additionally, the session will explore how these shifts impact research support within knowledge organisations and R&D institutions. As research funding becomes more politicised, RMAs must develop new skills and governance models to ensure institutional success. The panel will provide insights into best practices for adapting to these changes and discuss the future trajectory of RMA careers.

By sharing global perspectives, this panel aims to foster dialogue on how RMAs can drive impact amid uncertainty and ensure that research and innovation continue to thrive as essential drivers of societal progress.

## — University community perceptions on the impact of research in a Mozambican flagship University

**Prof Eugenia Cossa**<sup>1</sup>, Prof. Amalia Uamusse<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Education and Culture, Maputo, Mozambique, <sup>2</sup>Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique

### **Biography:**

Eugenia Flora Rosa Cossa is currently the National Director of Science, Technology and Innovation and between 2008 and 2020 was Dean of the Faculty of Education and National Director of Higher Education. She is Associate Professor of Science Education at Eduardo Mondlane University. She is involved in coordination of research projects in the areas of teacher education, gender, environmental education and climate changes in partnership with national, regional and international organizations and universities. She is a member of editorial boards, academic and research organizations and associations e.g.: SARIMA, SAARMSTE, FORGES (Higher Education Management Forum for Portuguese speaking Countries and Regions).

Eduardo Mondlane University (EMU) was commended as a flagship university among eight African universities according to the report published in 2013 by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET, 2013). This prominence is embedded in its vision and mission adopted in 2013, that calls for the transformation into a research university and hence, a new Strategic Plan (2018-2028) was approved highlighting research as the foundation of teaching-learning and extension processes. After about ten years of the approval of the new vision, perceptions of the university community (Lecturers, Technical Administrative Staff and Researchers) were assessed to understand the extent to which the nature of the research conducted at EMU contributes to the effective and sustainable implementation of the strategic objectives sought with a research university. Specifically, this article aims to assess the university community perceptions concerning the (i) functions and impact of the research conducted at EMU in the society; and (ii) contributions to future perspectives of EMU as a research university in terms of management and sustainability. A survey containing 18 multiple choice questions and one open question for comments and suggestions was applied among the university community. Preliminary results indicate the relevance of the research carried out at EMU in promoting scientific, technological and sustainable development of the society as positive; however, in the current stage it contributes moderately to solve community. A decentralized research management approach within the academic units was claimed as being the most appropriate. Furthermore, infrastructure deficiency, lack of funds and incentives for researchers are referred as some of the challenges impacting the quality of research at EMU.

## — IP and collaboration: Painless or a Puzzle?

**Mr Thandanani Cwele<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Cwengile Cwele<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Spoor & Fisher, Centurion, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Thandanani Cwele is a Patent Attorney and holds a PhD in Chemistry from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and an LLB from the University of South Africa.

His primary focus revolves around patent prosecution for both local and international applicants. This includes tasks such as drafting patent applications and providing advice on the patentability of inventions within the field of chemistry.

Managing intellectual property (IP) arising from collaborative projects with co-inventors and/or co-applicants presents unique challenges. This is especially true where the IP includes inventors and applicants from different countries. This presentation will explore these complexities and offer practical solutions.

The discussion will cover the difficulties of cross-border collaboration, focusing on the varying requirements that impact the patent application process and prosecution when collaborating parties are from different jurisdictions. The criteria for determining inventorship will be examined, emphasizing the importance of clear agreements and thorough documentation to avoid disputes.

The necessity of obtaining foreign filing licenses when filing patent applications in other jurisdictions will be addressed, covering the legal and procedural aspects involved. Strategic considerations for deciding where to file the first or priority application will be explored, highlighting cost-effective approaches. The presentation will also consider the challenges of coordinating instructions from multiple parties.

The objective of this presentation is to provide valuable insights on strategic management of multi-party collaborations to ensure the smooth prosecution and avoid unwanted pitfalls, while protecting IP arising from such collaborations.

## — Navigating challenges and opportunities of product design in resource-constrained environment

**Mr Sipho Dikweni**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CSIR, Centurion, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Sipho is a Commercialization Manager at the CSIR, responsible in transforming IP into market-ready products and shipping them to the market. He serves on the Advisory Board of the SA Artificial Intelligence Association and is a strategic advisor on entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology development. With expertise in IP management, venture creation, and commercialization, Sipho has supported entrepreneurs, companies, and universities in product design, market access, investment structuring and exits. Passionate about market discovery, customer needs, and value creation, his interests include deal sourcing, investment management, product design, new venture creation and scaling startups.

The process of designing products within a resource-constrained environment presents both challenges and opportunities. Translating early-stage research into market-ready products requires balancing innovation with commercial feasibility. This presentation explores the complexities of product design in such settings, drawing on firsthand experience in developing technologies from resource-constrained research environments.

A key challenge is the inherent uncertainty of research-stage technologies, which often lack immediate market validation. This necessitates rigorous feasibility assessments, iterative prototyping, and alignment with industry needs. Historically, research institutions developed technologies, leaving product development to industries that licensed those technologies. However, the market has shifted, with industries now seeking fully developed products rather than technologies. Products sell, not technologies. This underscores the need to integrate product design principles early in the R& Technology Development process.

Limited resources further complicate commercialization efforts. Funding constraints and competing priorities often divert researchers' attention from product design, while a lack of dedicated resources for prototyping, market validation and feedback loops from the customer widens the gap between innovation and market readiness. As a result, many promising technologies fail to transition beyond technological status.

Despite these challenges, these environments have something of value to offer. Interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers, designers, and industry partners can bridge the gap between research and market needs. Early integration of product design thinking—such as user-centered design and iterative testing—can enhance commercial viability. Strategic partnerships and targeted funding initiatives can also provide critical support for product development.

This presentation argues that addressing these challenges requires a paradigm shift. By embedding product design principles into the R&D process and securing resources for commercialization, research institutions can better position their technologies for market success. Such an approach not only accelerates the translation of research into impactful products but also strengthens the role of research institutions in driving economic growth and societal progress.

## — The five step ladder to effective partnerships

**Dr Robin Drennan**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Robin Drennan has a PhD in Chemistry from Rhodes University. He has undertaken applied research in a public company, AECL, and a science council, CSIR. He worked at the NRF where he managed several programmes. In 2011 he joined the Wits as Director for Research Development. His role entails leading, encouraging and supporting research across the University. In 2010 he won a Golden Quill award for research reporting, in 2017 a SARIMA award for distinguished contribution to the RMA profession and has Senior Research Manager Recognition from the IPRC. He is the general secretary of the Royal Society of SA.

Research partnerships are developed either at the individual level or at the institutional level. Both are important. The latter is meant to pave the way for the former. However, it would appear from the bibliometric data that the two are not equally successful. The advantage of the individual level partnership development is the attraction provided by the interest in the specific research project. At the institutional level this excitement is less obvious and therefore does not fuel the collaboration.

Our five-step ladder of elevated trust and mutual activity has proved a successful tool in bringing more equity to these institutional partnerships when compared with the individual partnerships. The ladder offers tangible steps to build trust and shared activity. It helps to turn the subtle and often delicate steps towards mutual trust into more practical and functional activities. However, it would appear from the experience that the involvement of research management in the partnership is an important, if not essential, boost of energy enabling the partnership to move up the steps.

In a sense this is not surprising. Research management and administration is after all an enabling profession. A function designed to steward the research process making it more effective and efficient.



## — Enhancing pre-award efficiency: Leveraging automation to streamline grant proposal processes

Ms Jacqueline Sylvester<sup>1</sup>, Ms Likho Sikutshwa<sup>1</sup>, Ms Jolene Fransman<sup>1</sup>, Dr Dionne Miles<sup>1</sup>, **Dr Jonathan Dugas**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Jonathan Dugas is a Senior Proposal Development Specialist with over nine years of experience in the pre-award and post-award landscape. His core expertise is NIH and US funding, but he also has experience with other major international funders such as the Wellcome Trust and the International Development Research Centre. He and his colleagues on the International Grants Hub team work with academic applicants to help them identify funding opportunities; assess their suitability and eligibility; and prepare their funding applications so they can submit competitive proposals.

The research funding landscape in higher education is continuously evolving, with funders tightening regulations and frequently updating their frameworks to include more rigorous due diligence and application requirements. This requires pre-award teams to remain agile, proactively adapting to these shifts while staying ahead of emerging changes.

During this time of financial constraints, the International Grants Hub at UCT strategically leveraged freely available technology to streamline processes by automating forms. One such innovation is our Wellcome Trust automated process. Researchers complete an eligibility questionnaire based on their career stage and research topic before developing a full proposal. If they do not meet the funder's criteria, we advise them early, saving time for researchers, finance teams, and pre-award staff. This ensures that only eligible and well-aligned proposals are submitted, improving efficiency and reducing administrative burden. These innovations have enabled us to allocate resources more effectively, focusing on priority areas and ensuring that the pre-award processes are navigated efficiently and timeously.

Researchers often find it more difficult to submit funding applications when there are delays in pre-award processes. The identification of institutional blockages causing strain on internal approval processes is critical when developing strategies to reduce administrative bottlenecks in order to get funding applications submitted. By ensuring compliance with institutional and funder guidelines and policies, we lessen the administrative burden on researchers and departments when application deadlines are approaching. Our researchers can thus rest assured that our automated innovations ensure that applications are within remit, adhering to all funder requirements and that all internal stakeholders involved in the application process have been notified timeously via our automated forms.

In conclusion, automating our processes not only ensures that we work more efficiently but also ensures that we comply with all funder guidelines, reducing administrative burdens and allowing researchers to focus on their core work.

## — Empowering researchers for the future: The Futures-Responsive Adaptive Model for Empowering Scholarship (FRAMES) model and its role in driving transformative change

**Dr Marianne Engelbrecht, Prof Lessing Labuschagne**

<sup>1</sup>UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa, <sup>2</sup>Unisa, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Lessing Labuschagne began his career as a scholar and researcher, later transitioning into Research Management and Administration. In 2011, he was appointed Executive Director of Research, Innovation, and Commercialisation at UNISA. He has supervised numerous postgraduate students and published several papers and book chapters. Recognized as a Senior Research Management Professional in 2021, he joined the International Professional Recognition Council for Research Management in 2023. He further serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Research Management and Administration as well as being an Honorary Academic Advisor on the PM World Journal.

The last decade has seen increased attention to researcher development within the field of academic practice, often in response to institutional policies and higher education strategic imperatives. As the academic landscape evolves, innovative capacity development approaches are essential to promote transformation, inclusivity, challenge traditional paradigms, and address the lived experiences of researchers in a technology-enabled Society 5.0 environment. Sustainable and inclusive change in researcher development requires targeted interventions that empower researchers as active participants in their growth, equipping them with the skills needed to navigate complex research ecosystems, foster collaboration, and drive innovation. In 2024, the Research Development Academy at UNISA identified, conceptualised, developed and implemented five research capacity development programmes, following a comprehensive gap analysis using the bespoke UNISA Researcher Development Framework (RDF) as the foundation. The 4+1 model was developed using an anticipatory action learning approach that encourages researchers to proactively engage with emerging trends, challenges, and uncertainties in their fields, fostering adaptability and critical thinking. This paper explores the four phases of the 4+1 model, namely gap-analysis, conceptualisation, instructional design and implementation, emphasising key outcomes, challenges, and the integration of evaluation mechanisms to measure their impact on research productivity and institutional objectives. Grounded in evidence-based futures methodologies and data-driven analyses, the 4+1 model highlights how Research Managers can add significant value to researcher development through intentional, adaptive strategies and programmes that foster agile research management environments in times of disruption.

## — The Emperor's New Clothes: Why visibility matters in the research management profession

**Ms Eleni Flack-Davison**<sup>1</sup>, Ms Caryn Mcnamara<sup>1</sup>, Mr Liam McKervey<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, <sup>2</sup>University of Bristol, England

### **Biography:**

Eleni Flack-Davison, Legal Adviser, Research Compliance Manager, Head: Office of Research Integrity and the Research Data Protection Officer at Wits University. She is a Wits MIND institute Fellow. Eleni is part of the SARIMA Research Management Portfolio Committee. She is part of the REASA Deputy Chair and heads up the Marketing and Communications sub-Committee. She is part of ASSAf drafting Committee for the POPIA Code of Conduct for Research in SA. Eleni co-founded and co-Chairs the SARIMA Northern Regions Research Ethics and Integrity CoP and the Steering Committee for the CoPs. Eleni is a Certified VIRT2UE Research Integrity Trainer.

When research works well, often the work of Research Managers and Administrators (RMAs) can be overlooked or hidden behind the scenes. Yet, when issues arise during the research process, the importance of RMAs in finding solutions, addressing blockages in the system and managing complex relationships becomes vital to the success of a research project.

RMAs are uniquely situated within the research ecosystem in their roles as facilitators to enable successful research, and should be highlighted. Using real life case studies from a South African and UK perspective we will discuss the commonalities of issues faced by global RMAs that can make it extremely difficult for individual RMA voices to be heard in a culture of competing interests. Whilst each RMA specialist area is important, challenges can hinder the visibility of RMAs.

Promoting stronger collaborations between RMAs to embed a culture of sharing best practice both internally and externally, we are recognising the need to develop a deeper understanding of the bespoke issues faced by partnering organisations. Research organisations that understand the important role RMAs play within the research lifecycle, can ensure successful research outcomes and embed greater sustainability within our profession.

Whilst acknowledging that individual RMA specialist areas are important, in order to continue facilitating successful research in a global research environment, we need to better collaborate with our RMA colleagues within our own institutions and globally to grow networks towards reducing challenges. In doing so, we can continue to foster a culture of collaborative research within professional services and academic partnerships to achieve this goal.

These perspectives are provided from RMAs from the Wits University, Johannesburg in South Africa and the University of Bristol in the UK, exploring how the visibility of RMAs is vital in building upon the sustainability of our profession. We encourage interactivity in this session.

## — Tech Transfer in the Metaverse: Exploring the potential of VR

**Ms Anne Gabathuse**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CSIR, Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Anne Gabathuse is the Executive Manager for Business Development and Commercialisation at Smart Society, with over 14 years of experience in technology transfer. Holding a BSc Honours in Biochemistry, an MSc in Chemical Engineering, and an MBA, Anne has developed a strong skillset in managing and commercialising intellectual property. Her leadership at Smart Society shapes business development strategies, driving innovation and tech transfer within the research and development sector. Passionate about pushing boundaries, Anne's expertise and foresight help position Smart Society as a forward-thinking leader in the tech industry, continuously advancing in a rapidly evolving landscape.

The metaverse is a dynamic virtual environment powered by extended reality technologies which include augmented, virtual, and mixed reality, along with 3D graphics. It is rapidly transforming how we interact and experience digital spaces from both a business and personal perspective. The business world is increasingly exploring the metaverse's applications following the recognition of its potential to enhance financial sustainability. This abstract investigates the potential of applying the transformative metaverse concept to revolutionize the technology transfer space by fostering collaboration, accelerating innovation, and expediting the commercialization of research breakthroughs. Technology transfer is pivotal for translating research innovations into practical solutions that drive economic growth, enhance quality of life, and address pressing societal challenges. By leveraging immersive virtual environments, the metaverse can diminish geographical limitations, enabling real-time, interactive learning and collaboration among researchers, industry partners, investors, and other stakeholders essential for the successful translation of research outputs to the market. In the tech transfer space, the metaverse can specifically 1) Enhance visualization and prototyping through real-time iterative design processes, 2) Accelerate knowledge transfer through virtual workshops, 3) Expand market access through virtual exhibitions and trade shows, 4) Promote secure and transparent negotiations and transactions, and 5) Allow digital twin integration to enable real world simulation of new technologies. With the presented upsides of adopting metaverse technologies in any industry also comes challenges of equitable access, data security and privacy concerns, infrastructure limitation and user adoption. Hence, both opportunities and challenges presented by the adoption of this technology in the tech transfer space will be explored.

## — We know this—so what now? Living our agency in collaboration

**Dr Renee Goretsky**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dr. Renee Goretsky is a Specialist Research Grant Proposal Developer and Writer at Stellenbosch University, with over 20 years of experience in research management. She has held key roles at the NRF and university research offices in both South Africa and Canada.

Her expertise lies in initiating and fostering research networks and partnerships to advance knowledge across disciplines. As a former National Contact Point for the EU's Funding Programme, she played a pivotal role in facilitating collaborations between South African and EU researchers. Currently, she supports researchers in developing and writing large-scale international research grant proposals across various funding agencies.

The discourse on best practices in research collaboration is well-established —communication, trust-building, shared goals, and interdisciplinary teamwork. Numerous case studies highlight these best practices, yet we continue to face persistent challenges. Why do these principles not always translate into effective collaboration? Why do we keep revisiting the same issues?

Perhaps the challenge lies not in a lack of knowledge but in how we apply it. Too often, we look outward—to policies, institutional structures, and predefined models. What if the missing piece isn't "better systems" but rather individual agency within collaborative research networks? Instead of looking outward for solutions, we must recognize our own capacity to shape, influence, and transform the way we collaborate.

This presentation will offer practical insights and tools to help research managers and administrators define and live their agency within collaborative research networks. It will explore how to navigate challenges, foster engagement, and create research ecosystems beyond rigid frameworks toward more responsive, resilient, and meaningful collaboration.

By reframing the challenge, we pivot from passive participation in collaborative structures to active agency in shaping them. By doing so, we can move from simply managing collaboration to truly enabling it.



## — Shifting the power: Factors that influence the lack of collaboration amongst early career RMA practioners

**Ms Nokahle Hadebe**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Wits Commercial Enterprise, Parktown, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Nokahle Hadebe is an early career RMA practioner with educational background in Biological Sciences. She has been a research administrator for most of her career life until late 2024 where she was promoted to Junior Research Co-ordinator in less than 2 years of working at Wits Enterprise. She has co-authored a published paper under the journal of radiation physics and chemistry titled Prediction of dose rates around the interim spent fuel storage facility. Her current expertise are in the areas of research, administration and project co-ordination. Her aspirations lie in being involved in groundbreaking research.

Wits Enterprise co-ordinates multi-stakeholder engagements involving collaboration between academics, commercial pioneers and research management administrators. The Absa-Nwando programme is a learning programme that has identified scarce and critical skillsets in the areas of Geo Spatial, Climate and Data Analysis, Data Science, Robotics, and Artificial Intelligence with the aim to develop and innovate better systems through the mentorship of interns by seasoned academics. Biljon and Mnapwele (2023) explored the power shift dynamics within the collaboration of research networks, specifically between students and supervisors, with the aim to investigate the reasons for the lack of research collaboration in Africa. One of their findings was the issue of new researchers having minimal expectations for collaborations.

The goal of this presentation is to review the aspects of power dynamics and other factors influencing collaborations of early career researchers and RMA's with their research partners; to explore the power dynamics that may include intimidation, lowered expectations of the novice researcher's capabilities, proper placement and accessibility of knowledge and information to empower collaborative efforts and ways to eliminate the gatekeeping mindset that inhibits partnerships and ultimately ways to bridge the gap between research collaborators.

Through the application of the interventions identified we hope to enhance engagements in our projects, for example the aforementioned ABSA-Nwando program, where collaboration between more partners could create more opportunities for the emergence of innovative solutions to the wide-ranging challenges we face. We as RM practitioners could add this to our already diverse skillset, as an additional strength that we could bring to diverse collaborations to ensure their success.

## — Balancing publishing and patent protection: Navigating disclosure and enablement challenges in light of G 2/21

**Mr Dirk Hanekom**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Spoor & Fisher, Claremont, ZA

### **Biography:**

Dirk is a patent attorney at Spoor & Fisher.

He keeps himself busy with the drafting and prosecuting patent of applications in a diverse range of chemical sectors including small molecule pharma, petrochemical, catalysis, polymer and rubber chemistry, agricultural sciences, and general chemical processing technologies.

If he is not drafting specs, then you are likely to find him next to the sport field supporting his two young boys, or on a boat somewhere chasing after fish.

South African universities face a persistent challenge in balancing the pressures of academic publishing with the strategic need for timely patent filings. Researchers are incentivised to publish their findings to advance their careers and enhance institutional rankings. However, premature publication can jeopardise patentability, while rushed patent filings risk inadequate disclosure, leading to enablement objections during prosecution.

This presentation explores the delicate balance between these competing demands, with a focus on the recent Enlarged Board of Appeal decision in G 2/21 and its implications for university innovation managers. The ruling clarifies the European Patent Office's stance on enablement requirements, reinforcing the necessity of providing sufficient technical details in initial filings. Universities must, therefore, implement robust IP strategies to ensure that patent applications are both timely and adequately detailed, mitigating risks of rejection due to lack of enablement.

We will consider the impact of G 2/21 on enablement standards and patent prosecution strategies, best practices for coordinating publication and patent filing timelines, and strategies for overcoming enablement objections while maintaining commercial potential.

By addressing these critical issues, the talk aims to equip innovation managers with practical insights to optimise patenting strategies within an academic research setting, ensuring both academic and commercial success.

## — Navigating open access: Strategic IP management in global genetic resource projects

**Ms Monique Heystek**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Monique Heystek is Technology Transfer Specialist at the University of the Western Cape where her work is focused on IP & Contracts. Monique holds degrees in both Plant Biotechnology and Law and was Administrative Head of Patent Renewals at Spoor & Fisher before joining the University of the Western Cape.

As initiatives advocating for open-access sharing of genetic resources gain momentum, the University of the Western Cape (UWC) actively aligns these practices with careful intellectual property management. This presentation explores UWC's strategic approach to participating in global genetic research initiatives, which involve extensive sequencing and sharing of genetic resources on open-access platforms.

UWC's commitment to contributing to these initiatives is tempered by the necessity to comply with both national and international legal frameworks such as the Nagoya Protocol, NEMBA, and WIPO Treaty. The presentation outlines how UWC has developed guidelines to ensure that its contributions not only enhance global scientific efforts but also safeguard its intellectual property rights and meet compliance requirements. These guidelines are designed to manage risks associated with the misuse of resources, non-compliance with laws, and adherence to UWC's internal policies, especially when collaborating with entities from non-signatory countries.

Key to UWC's strategy is the role of its Technology Transfer Office, which reviews and guides the provision of genetic resources to ensure alignment with legal and policy frameworks before their dissemination through open-access platforms. This process is centered on the Technology Transfer Office's role in reviewing each case for compliance, advising UWC affiliates on the approval of provisions, and recommending actions to mitigate risks associated with potential legal conflicts, policy discrepancies, or other relevant issues.

This case study exemplifies how unexpected challenges in technology and innovation management can be navigated through proactive legal and strategic planning, ensuring that research contributions are both impactful and protected.

## — Assessing the impact of public sector technology transfer policies: An overview of indicators and tools

**Mr Philip Hoekstra**<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Danielle Badenhorst, Ms Nicolle Abrahams

<sup>1</sup>University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Philip is the IP Manager of the University of Cape Town, overseeing the IP Management Team in the Department of Research Contracts & Innovation (RC&I). He specialises in identifying, protecting, and commercialising university inventions in many disciplines. His past roles include Industry Analyst at Frost & Sullivan, IP Research Engineer at Optimal Energy, Candidate Patent Attorney at Von Seidels, and Process Engineer at Sans Fibres. Philip holds a chemical engineering degree from Stellenbosch University and is pursuing an M.Eng in Technology & Innovation Management at the University of Pretoria. He is also a Registered Technology Transfer Professional (RTTP).

Public sector technology transfer (PSTT) plays a pivotal role in fostering innovation and economic development, and policies and policy instruments are implemented to enable this. The impact of these policies and policy instruments on a National System of Innovation (NSI) and the broader society varies greatly, and many fall short of their intended goals.

Understanding the impact of PSTT policies is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it helps identify best practices and select appropriate policy performance indicators. Secondly, it provides policymakers with evidence-based insights to refine or design new policies suitable for the local context. Lastly, it contributes to the broader discourse on innovation systems, particularly in developing countries like SA, where innovation is a key driver of economic growth and development. In the context of SA, which is striving to enhance its global competitiveness, improve socio-economic development and reverse trends of deindustrialisation, the need to assess the impact of PSTT policies and policy instruments becomes even more significant.

This presentation will give a broad overview of traditional and modern PSTT policy impact indicators and tools and will seek to identify future research areas. Special attention will be given to transformative innovation policy (TIP) and theories of change (TOC), concepts that are concerned with maximising the desired outcomes and impacts of technologies in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The presentation will also briefly discuss efforts to assess the impact of SA's PSTT policies.

This presentation will be based partially on a short research project that was conducted by Philip Hoekstra (the presenter), Danielle Badenhorst and Nicolle Abrahams in furtherance of their master's degrees in technology and innovation management.

## — Well-managed research information plays critical roles in enabling organizations make informed decisions

**Ms Patricia Jacob**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Patricia Jacob is a Registered Research Management Professional with the IPRC and is a member of the STARs Program.

She is currently employed at the Nelson Mandela University as Senior Manager in the Department of Research Support and Management: responsible for strategic projects such NRF grants Management, Research Publications Management Systems and submission of Research Outputs (Books and Chapters) to the Department of Higher Education.

She continues to contribute to the Research Management environment by contributing to forums and actively participates in communities of practice.

In today's rapidly changing research landscape, Research Information Management plays a critical role in supporting strategic decision-making by providing access to relevant data that enables institutions to navigate uncertainty and make informed choices about future directions. In any field, decision-making is a crucial part of the process, and decisions made can greatly impact the outcome. Having a clear evidence-based understanding of the institution's performance towards its goals and missions is key to decision making.

The Presentation will highlight the research life cycle and the optimum combination of spaces for Researchers, at Nelson Mandela University (NMU), to flourish, manage research data and generate knowledge supported by analytical systems.

Key aspects in facing disruption in an agile research environment and lessons learned to maintain quality and scope will be presented

Key Points that will be highlighted

- Forecasting: Collaborative Data Analysis
- Problem Solving
- Embracing Change
- Improved accuracy
- Prioritizing Tasks
- Incremental delivery
- Fostering Collaboration
- Simplifying Process
- Reflect and Adapt

**Keywords:** Strategic Decision Making, Dynamic Landscape; strategy implementation

### **Reference:**

<https://cayuse.com/blog/10-research-management-trends-to-watch-in-2025/>



## — Due diligence in research management

**Dr Raven Jimmy**<sup>1</sup>, Mr Mike Nxumalo<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National Research Foundation, Lynnwoodridge, South Africa

### **Biography:**

I have 18 years' experience in Research management at the NRF. My focus was international relations, Centers of Excellences, Research Infrastructure, Contracts management, M and E, Science impact and engagement

Due diligence (DD) is the analysis or exercise of care that a sensible business or person is anticipated to take before entering into activities with another party. This assists an establishment to determine whether these engagements align to its strategic intentions; enable level of risk assessment by proposed partnership and detailed understanding what challenges maybe involved. Partnerships in this environment comprises, but not limited to, academic collaborator, subcontractor and research funder etc. Additionally, Due diligence studies the regulatory, the legal, financial and academic circumstances of all partners and third parties and statutory settings of the country/countries in which the organisation will function. The due diligence instructions will vary from project to project and country to country. The bigger the scope of the project, the more stringent the due diligence check. This is highly imperative when ensuring that good governance prevails during the life cycle of the project.

There are two distinctive stages in the DD process. This early stage of DD process are shorter and is used to collect elementary information on the partner and to emphasise any impending challenges or red flags with engaging with the prospective partner. The second is more detailed checks at the award stage which is integral in the preparation of the collaboration agreement prior to work commencement. Checks at the application stage are conducted by the International Funding Officer (IFO) based in Research Services, with support from PI where necessary and the lead contact at the partner/collaborator organisation. The checks conducted at the award stage are mostly prepared by the partner/collaborator organisation with assistance and guidance where necessary from the IFO. This presentation will highlight and surely entice research institutions and funders to look into their governance structures more stringently as ignoring this subject can have devastating consequences for the researcher and their organisation.

## — Piloting a training approach to assist early career academics in increasing their research visibility

**Dr Dheshnie Keswell**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Alexandra Sutherland<sup>1</sup>, Dr Amanda Claassen-Smithers<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dheshnie Keswell joined the University of Cape Town (UCT) Emerging Research Programme and Researcher Development Academy® (UCT RDA), at UCT, as a Research Development Coordinator in 2017. Her role involved the designing, facilitation and coordinating learning opportunities for academic staff, while also playing a mentoring and supportive role to Early Career Academics in their career development. In 2024, she took on a more strategic role as Senior Manager: Researcher Development at UCT. Through the UCT RDA, she has been involved in designing and delivering capacity development workshops for academics at other South African institutions.

Traditionally academics became familiar with the work of other academics through reading their publications or interacting at conferences and academic meetings. These days academics can also leverage the accessibility and reach of online platforms, such as ResearchGate, LinkedIn, X (Twitter) to showcase their profiles and work. To do so effectively, it has become ever more important for academics to carefully consider their 'academic brand' - who they are, what they do and how they represent themselves and engage with academic and non-academic audiences.

Early career researchers are not skilled in acknowledging and defining their brand and how to best portray their brand across the various platforms, from presenting their work at conferences to engaging via the various digital and social media platforms.

Thus, the aim of this project was to develop training workshops to help early career academics develop their verbal presentation skills, develop their personal brand as an academic and to strategize how to effectively use non-academic platforms to improve visibility and impact of their work.

The objectives of the project included 1) To help early career researchers to develop their academic identity and brand, 2) To enhance the research presentation skills of early career researchers, 3) To enhance research communication and dissemination skills with non-academic audiences, and 4) To inform researchers on best approaches to using social media to increase their visibility in the research environment.

We report on the approach, delivery and outcomes of the workshops, highlighting the importance of being innovative and adaptable with the changing needs and environment of academia.

## — Bridging the gap: Research integrity and compliance among University Students in Botswana

Dr Ayodeji Michael Obadire<sup>1</sup>, Dr Changu Batisani<sup>2</sup>, **Ms Kealeboga Kgosidintsi**<sup>1</sup>, Prof Olumide Jaiyeoba<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Botswana Accountancy College, Gaborone, Botswana, <sup>2</sup>Botswana Open University, Gaborone, Botswana, <sup>3</sup>Botho University, Gaborone, Botswana

### Biography:

Kealeboga I. Kgosidintsi is a Library Officer at Botswana Accountancy College and a Master's candidate in Research and Public Policy at the University of Botswana. With expertise in knowledge management and research support, she has also worked at BITRI, enhancing research accessibility. Holds a Bachelor's in Library and Information Studies and certifications in copyright law. Passionate about community service, she volunteers with Bereka Mosadi Association, leading impactful social initiatives. Kealeboga excels in library management and digitization, committed to advancing knowledge accessibility and evidence-based policy development in Botswana.

Dr. Obadire is the Portfolio Manager for Research and Innovation at Botswana Accountancy College, where he oversees and manages research and innovation initiatives and fosters a culture of research excellence within the College. He holds a PhD in Finance and Accounting from the University of Venda, South Africa. He is equally qualified as a chartered accountant (CA), chartered management accountant (CIMA), chartered global management accountant (CGMA), and certified professional accountant (CPA).

This study investigates the awareness, understanding, and compliance with research integrity and ethical guidelines among university students in Botswana. A survey-based research design was employed, targeting six out of ten registered universities in the country. Data from 135 participants were analyzed using SPSS 29 for descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was applied to identify strategies for enhancing compliance with research ethics and integrity principles. The findings revealed that although a significant majority (87.4%) of students were aware of research ethics structures and 80% reported a clear understanding of research integrity principles, this knowledge did not consistently translate into ethical research practices. Over half of the respondents (53.3%) indicated the absence of a strong culture of research ethics within their institutions, highlighting a gap between theoretical awareness and practical application. Key barriers to compliance included insufficient training on research ethics, lack of proper guidance from supervisors—particularly where supervisors lacked expertise in ethical oversight—and limited institutional support mechanisms. To address these challenges, the study recommends integrating ethics education into academic curricula, conducting regular seminars and workshops, establishing mentoring programs, implementing transparent reporting mechanisms, enforcing stricter penalties for unethical behaviour, and extending dissertation timelines to allow for thorough and ethical research practices. While the study is limited to the perceptions of university students in Botswana, excluding perspectives from faculty and administrators, it underscores the critical need for practical interventions to bridge the gap between awareness and actual adherence to ethical research standards. Strengthening research ethics and integrity within Botswana's universities is essential for fostering responsible research practices, enhancing academic credibility, and contributing to the global discourse on research integrity.

In short, this study contributes to the session by highlighting gaps in research ethics compliance among researchers and offers practical strategies to strengthen ethical practices, benefiting research managers and educators in fostering academic integrity.

## — Exploring adaptive research ethics practices in Botswana amid unforeseen challenges

**Ms Kealeboga Kgosidintsi<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Botswana Accountancy College, Gaborone, Botswana

### **Biography:**

Library and Information Science Professional | Knowledge Management Specialist | Community Advocate

Kealeboga I. Kgosidintsi is a Library Officer at Botswana Accountancy College and a Master's candidate in Research and Public Policy at the University of Botswana. With expertise in knowledge management and research support, she has also worked at BITRI, enhancing research accessibility. Holds a Bachelor's in Library and Information Studies and certifications in copyright law. Passionate about community service, she volunteers with Bereka Mosadi Association, leading impactful social initiatives. Kealeboga excels in library management and digitization, committed to advancing knowledge accessibility and evidence-based policy development in Botswana.

Research ethics frameworks often face challenges in dynamic and resource-constrained environments, necessitating adaptive strategies that align with evolving societal and technological landscapes. This study explores the implementation of adaptive research ethics practices in Botswana, a nation characterized by unique socio-cultural contexts and policy shifts that influence ethical considerations in research. By examining the intersections of global ethical standards, local traditions, and emerging challenges—such as rapid technological advancements and socio-economic disparities—this paper highlights the importance of flexibility in ethical frameworks. Key challenges include integrating new technologies, ensuring community participation, and navigating the complexities of conservation research and indigenous knowledge systems. The study underscores the role of participatory approaches and innovative methodologies in fostering ethical compliance while promoting research integrity. Ultimately, the findings contribute to broader discussions on research ethics in developing nations, advocating for a more context-sensitive and inclusive approach to ethical research governance in Botswana.

## — Research ethics committee administrators' role in the digital ethics review transformation

**Mr Francis Kombe<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>EthiXPERT NPC, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Francis Kombe is the CEO of EthiXPERT. He is a public health expert, community engagement practitioner, and bioethicist with extensive experience in international health research institutions. He holds an MSocSc in research ethics from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), an MPH, and a PGDPH from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). He is currently pursuing a Wellcome Trust-funded PhD in bioethics at UKZN.

He is a co-founder and chairperson of the African Research Integrity Network (ARIN) and served on the planning committee for the 6th and 7th World Conferences on Research Integrity.

**Introduction:** The capacity to review study protocols and provide ethical oversight in clinical research is essential to global health. In Africa, research ethics committees (RECs) play a critical role in the ethical conduct of research. As the number of clinical trials and the complexity of research designs continue to increase, the need for RECs to invest in capacity building, including digital ethics review, continues to take a centre of focus. Unfortunately, although some RECs have transitioned to digital online ethics review platforms, the factors attributed to the success and challenges of this transition have not been well studied. This presentation will focus on the experiences of RECs transitioning from manual to online review systems and the role REC administrators can play in the digital ethics review transformation

**Method:** The presentation will focus on the ongoing assessment of administrators transitioning from other ethics review forms to using the RHInnO Ethics online review platform.

**Results:** A total of 43 RECs are currently installed with the RHInnO Ethics. Out of these, 30 are actively using the platform, while 13 have stopped using it. Of the 30 RECs presently using the platform, 10 are self-funded, and 20 are grant-funded. The presentation will focus on the experiences of REC administrators of the 30 RECs currently using the RHInnO Ethics platform and their role in the transition made by their RECs. Challenges and opportunities for promoting the digital ethics review transformation will also be discussed. The meetings and consultative discussions with REC administrators are scheduled for April 2025

**Conclusion:** Findings from these consultative feedback sessions will inform how REC administrators can be supported to play a more meaningful role in the digital ethics review transformation.



## — Building a responsive research environment: A framework for monitoring improvement plans at NWU

**Ms Zamakayise Kose**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>North-West University, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Zamakayise Kose is a Senior Manager at North-West University (NWU), South Africa, overseeing the Research Quality Programme within the Directorate of Research & Postgraduate Support. Prior to joining NWU, Zamakayise spent eight years at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), coordinating research projects with international collaborators. She has co-authored several publications and holds an MA in Research Psychology. Zamakayise is passionate about advancing research quality and fostering meaningful partnerships.

**Background:** The evaluation of research entities at NWU plays an important role in enhancing research quality. All research entities undergo evaluation, either through internal or external processes. In 2024, a new requirement was introduced for research entities to submit improvement plans following their evaluation. The Research & Postgraduate Support office, through the Research Quality Programme, is developing an innovative framework to monitor the implementation of these plans, fostering a more dynamic and responsive research environment.

**Aim:** The framework aims to foster an agile research management environment by promoting continuous improvement, stakeholder engagement, enhanced transparency, and effective risk management. It is designed to enable research entities to adapt to the evolving research landscape, improve their outcomes, and achieve sustainable growth.

**Method:** The framework will be implemented across 42 research entities, following institutional approval. A thematic analysis of the submitted improvement plans will identify common areas of focus and challenges. Feedback from stakeholders will be incorporated to refine the monitoring process and ensure its effectiveness.

### **Results:**

The findings will highlight key lessons learned from the framework's implementation, common areas of improvement across the research entities as well as the framework's potential for continued use to maintain a responsive and dynamic research environment.

**Conclusion:** The implementation of a structured framework to monitor improvement plans at NWU is set to be a key driver in fostering a dynamic and responsive research environment. Unlike traditional approaches, the framework's real-time adaptability and emphasis on continuous feedback and engagement will create a responsive environment that drives sustained improvements in research outcomes. By integrating these elements, the framework will set a new standard for research management, supporting NWU's commitment to research excellence and sustainable growth in an increasingly complex academic landscape.

## — Strengthening research management in Africa: A unified ARIMA platform for collaboration and innovation

**Mr Nabil Ksibi**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>NARIMA, Tunis, Tunisia

### **Biography:**

Nabil Aziz Ksibi is a seasoned professional with a rich background in technology, innovation management, and community engagement. With a focus on driving positive change in both local and global contexts, Nabil has played instrumental roles in various organizations and initiatives.

In addition to his work at ORCID, Nabil is the Founding Consultant and coordinator of the Northern African Research and Innovation Management Association (NARIMA). NARIMA is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing research and innovation management in Northern Africa, serving as a platform for promoting best practices and collaboration among research institutions in the region.

The North Africa Research and Innovation Management Association (NARIMA) is dedicated to fostering a dynamic and collaborative research ecosystem across the region. This abstract presents the concept of a unified ARIMA (African Research and Innovation Management Association) platform designed to connect research leaders, enhance collaboration, and streamline research management and innovation practices.

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and evolving research landscapes, research managers and innovation professionals must navigate disruptions while ensuring strategic decision-making and sustainable impact. The ARIMA platform will serve as a comprehensive research information management system, integrating research ethics, data governance, and strategic collaboration frameworks to support agile research environments. By leveraging emerging technologies, this platform will provide institutions with the necessary tools to manage research and innovation effectively.

The presentation will highlight how the ARIMA platform can address key challenges in research management, including fostering ethical research practices, strengthening institutional research cultures, and improving the efficiency of knowledge transfer. Additionally, it will explore how research managers, institutions, and policymakers can use the platform to measure and enhance innovation impact through evidence-based decision-making and data-driven insights.

The ARIMA platform will also play a critical role in supporting the next generation of researchers by offering professional development resources, mentorship opportunities, and capacity-building programs. By aligning with the themes of SARIMA 2025, NARIMA aims to demonstrate how a unified approach to research management and innovation can foster stronger networks, enhance institutional capabilities, and drive sustainable development in North Africa and beyond.

Through case studies and interactive discussions, this presentation will provide practical insights into the implementation of a unified research and innovation management system, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in achieving long-term research excellence.

## — Bridging compliance and innovation in research and innovation management

### **Mr Njabulo Makhunga Kubheka<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of the Western Cape (UWC) Technology Transfer Office (TTO), Cape Town, South Africa

#### **Biography:**

NJABULO KUBHEKA

Technology Transfer Officer

Candidate Registered Technology

Transfer Professional (RTTP)

Mr Njabulo Makhunga Kubheka is a Technology Transfer Officer: Intellectual Property and Bioprospecting Administration at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) Technology Transfer Office. His academic background includes obtaining a BCom (Law and Economics) degree with the University of South Africa (UNISA). His area of expertise includes providing support in terms of maintaining UWC Technology Transfer Office IP portfolio, NIPMO reporting, Seed Fund projects Management and Bioprospecting Portfolio.

Ensuring compliance with government regulations while undertaking research and innovation at research institutions can be a key challenge in research and technology transfer management. This is evident when undertaking research on Indigenous Biological Resources (IBR) for the purpose of bioprospecting which places a number of obligations on research institutions in order to comply with bioprospecting legislation.

A case study will be presented on a recent project involving early research on IBR, which led to bioprospecting, and the compliance gaps that were identified at the patenting stage, which had serious implications on the research institution.

This raises critical questions such as:

- Where does the responsibility lie to ensure researchers are complying with IBR legislation and regulations at the early research stage?
- Should the responsibility fall on the researchers themselves?
- Should the Research Support Offices be involved in ensuring compliance?
- Should the Technology Transfer/Innovation Offices (TTOs) be involved in the discovery (early stage research phase) compliance in the expectation of possible bioprospecting?

This presentation will examine the intersection between compliance in research and innovation, highlighting potential strategies for stronger collaboration between TTOs, Research Offices and Researchers, such as:

- Early-stage compliance interventions
- Clear institutional workflows and shared responsibilities
- Researcher training and awareness initiatives

By addressing these issues, the session will provide valuable insights for research managers and innovation and technology transfer professionals. Attendees will gain practical strategies to ensure compliance without hindering research progress. Strengthening collaboration between TTOs and Research Support Offices can help prevent regulatory setbacks and support the ethical, legal, and successful commercialization of research involving IBR.

## — Balancing transparency and compliance: The role of RMAs in protecting institutional identity

**Ms Leonie Louw<sup>1</sup>, Dr Retha G Visagie<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Leonie Louw is a Research Ethics Advisor at the University of South Africa, specializing in research ethics, academic integrity, and occupational health and safety. She holds dual master's degrees in Occupational Safety and Health and Management Sciences and is pursuing a PhD in Management Studies. A certified Ethics Ambassador and GrowthWheel Business Advisor, she has extensive experience in facilitating research ethics workshops and presenting at international conferences. Leonie has authored publications on safety management, entrepreneurship, and ethical leadership, integrating practical insights into her work. She is passionate about fostering research excellence and professional development in higher education.

Using the names of research sites, such as higher education institutions, in research publications raises critical ethical and legal considerations concerning the protection of juristic persons. This practice seems particularly prevalent in social sciences research, where institutional contexts and case studies are commonly the focus of studies. Research sites refer to the physical, virtual or institutional setting where research is conducted. These settings often operate as legally recognised entities with rights to privacy, data protection, and reputation management. However, researchers frequently reference institutions in their studies, often without formal ethics approval or institutional permission. Research Ethics Committees (RECs) and Research Managers and Administrators (RMAs) must ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. Yet, a preliminary desktop study revealed a potential lapse in clear procedures and monitoring of juristic persons' privacy rights in published research.

This study explores this practice to enhance RECs' and RMAs' awareness of these often-overlooked lapses in oversight and to foster insight into mitigating the associated risks. To this end, the findings of a desktop review of publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science will be discussed, examining the frequency and context in which the institutional names of higher education institutions appear in academic publications. By analysing the sample of studies published over the past decade, the study identifies trends in institutional naming. It assesses potential risks related to unauthorised name use, reputational harm, and compliance with data protection regulations such as the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and global equivalents like the GDPR. This paper contributes to the discussion on research integrity, institutional governance, and academic legal compliance, proposing recommendations for RMAs, publishers, and research ethics committees on responsible name usage. This study highlights the need to balance institutional protection with research transparency, ensuring institutions maintain control over how their identity is represented in academic work.

## — Ownership of publicly funded research outputs in South Africa: Implications for commercialization

**Dr Rendani Mamphiswana<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dr Rendani Mamphiswana is Innovation Director at iCatalysis Hub, an innovation and policy research boutique. He is Professor of Practice on Innovation and Policy at the University of Johannesburg and Board Member at The Innovation Hub. He has over 15 years of industry experience at Sasol and Nafasi Water, where he worked with and on several technologies in energy, chemicals and water sectors. He holds a PhD in Innovation Policy and Management from the University of Johannesburg. As part of his PhD, he developed an alternate conceptual lens to guiding and promoting innovation in emerging South Africa.

An institution conducting research owns publicly funded research outputs emanating out of the institution. Through dedicated technology transfer office in the institution, research outputs are further developed to technologies ready to transfer through various suitable mechanisms. The goal of the Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act (IPR-PFRD Act) in South Africa is to ensure that the intellectual property (IP) be for the benefit of South Africans. Considering that commercialization is not a primary objective of research institutions, the IP ownership model of IPR-PFRD Act could hinder commercialization, thus has a negative impact on the very goal of the benefit of South Africans. Through a case study approach of five countries, the aim of the research is to revisit the IPR-PFRD Act's IP ownership model as it relates to commercialization. The research contributes to further understanding of IP ownership models and their relationship with commercialization success. The research findings will have managerial and policy implications.

The presentation will present IP ownership model in South Africa, IP commercialization data since the installation of the Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act (IPR-PFRD Act), case studies of five countries on their IP ownership models and commercialization success.

The presentation contributes to policy frameworks on research commercialization. The audience will benefit from a rethinking of IPR-PFRD Act's IP ownership model as it relates to commercialization success.

## — Financial sustainability strategies for social innovation initiatives in resource-limited settings

**Dr Thembinkosi Maphosa**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Ana Casanueva-Gonzalez<sup>1</sup>, Ms Aisha Mahomed Ali<sup>1</sup>, Mr Luan Africa<sup>1</sup>, Prof Abdullah Bayat<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Western Cape, Bellville, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Thembinkosi Maphosa is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Technology Transfer Office at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. His research focuses on developing financial innovation strategies for social innovation initiatives in low-income communities, with a particular emphasis on technology transfer and commercialization.

Maphosa holds a PhD in a field related to sustainable development and renewable energy. His doctoral research explored the financial sustainability challenges of renewable energy-efficiency projects in low-income communities, using Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects as a case study. His research is well-positioned to contribute to the development of innovative solutions for low-income communities.

Social innovation initiatives in low-income communities in South Africa are crucial in addressing socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, inadequate healthcare, and limited economic opportunities. However, sustaining these initiatives financially remains a persistent challenge. This study explores viable financial sustainability models, revenue-generating mechanisms, and partnership opportunities that support financial resilience, enhancing the longevity and impact of social innovation projects.

Drawing from case studies and a systematic literature review, the research highlights best practices and policy recommendations for ensuring long-term sustainability. The study incorporates the social franchise model as one way to address the financial sustainability challenges of social innovation initiatives. A qualitative method approach will be employed, targeting a sample from a population of Social Innovation project beneficiaries and developers in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. An interview guide will be used as a tool to collect data. Thematic and content analysis were conducted using Atlas Ti.

Proposed financial mechanisms can be centered around innovative and effective funding models, such as royalties or digital fundraising from social media or technology platforms. The study also investigates the social entrepreneurship model, results-based financing, and community-based financing. Local community leadership buy-in, corporate partnerships, and well-researched feasibility studies are crucial. The research findings can assist in recommending other financial mechanisms for financial sustainability and social impact.

**Keywords:** financial sustainability, social entrepreneurship model, social impact, social innovation initiatives, technology transfer, low-income communities.

## — Air-lining postdoctoral fellows: Expanding global impact of the University of Pretoria's postdoctoral fellowship programme

**Mr Abe Mathopa<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Onalerona Matlawe<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Misiwe Moloi<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Mrs Onalerona Matlawe and Mrs Misiwe Moloi are employed by the University of Pretoria (UP) as Senior International Postgraduate Specialists Consultant in the Department of Research and Innovation under the Graduate Support Hub division. Their combined responsibilities include providing pre-care and in-care support for national and international postdoctoral research fellows from over 30 countries and administering their grants. Together, have more than 25 years of extensive experience in coordinating postdoctoral fellowship programmes, in which they have developed, refined administrative logistical and financial skills. They have also harnessed their craft in effective communication, planning, interpersonal, problem-solving, collaboration and networking skills.

The University of Pretoria's (UP) Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme serves as a global airline connecting nations, disciplines, and industries, fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and strategic impact. This study contributes to the discourse on Rethinking Networks in Research Management by showcasing the far-reaching impact of UP's postdoctoral initiatives. Drawing on data from the 2019–2024 period, the programme has hosted fellows from over 30 countries, with increasing representation from underrepresented regions such as the Middle East and South America. This international diversity not only enhances research capacity but also informs strategic decision-making on institutional partnerships.

The programme's relevance to industry stands out, with fellows actively engaged in sectors like finance, through the UP-Reserve Bank-funded postdocs programme, and water management, bridging the gap between academia and industrial practical applications. Notably, some postdocs are already employed in government and academia, amplifying the programme's real-time impact on international and national development. The strategic placement of fellows in fields like Statistics, Physics, and Engineering underscores UP's commitment to fostering an innovation-driven research culture.

The data analysis reveals an opportunity for greater collaboration with first-world nations, where postdoc participation remains limited. We recommend leveraging exchange programmes and targeted partnerships to enhance knowledge transfer and skill development. Furthermore, tracking the post-fellowship trajectories of alumni can provide valuable insights into national and global impact, guiding UP's strategic collaborations and contributing to South Africa's broader higher education ecosystem.

This study highlights the programme's role in cultivating future research management leaders and advancing international research networks, offering a model for the other 26 national institutions of higher learning. By strengthening governmental and institutional relations and aligning research efforts with industrial and global priorities, the UP Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme exemplifies the power of strategic research management, partnerships and innovation for sustainable impact.



## — Risks of Universities' dependence on government funding: Exploring adaptive strategies

**Mrs Dorcas Petunia Ndou<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Unarine Mathye<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Mrs Dorcas Ndou is an Information Officer and Mrs Unarine Mathye is a Grants Officer in the Department of Research, Innovation and Commercialisation, University of South Africa.

Learning is a strategic activity that nations undertake to achieve long-term technical transformation and economic development, and knowledge generation is a crucial input. Therefore, the initiatives aimed at knowledge creation and learning will have an impact on national innovation systems, which in turn will have an impact on the direction and pace of technological change. Universities are crucial contributors to knowledge innovation. While traditional science, technology, and innovation models dominate, expanding the knowledge base to include alternative sources can enhance learning and innovation. Universities play a pivotal role in shaping societies. Variations in government funding can leave universities financially unstable. A sudden reduction in funding may result in a shift in governmental objectives, economic downturns, or financial limits, prompting universities to scale back programs, lay off employees, or reduce research efforts. This instability impedes the pursuit of excellence by undermining long-term planning and investments in academic infrastructure. Reliance on government funding has potential to discourage universities from seeking diverse sources of income. The objective of this study is to assess the risks of universities' reliance on government funding. This study adopts a desktop research approach (also known as secondary research) to investigate and analyse government-level reports available in the public domain. Desktop research is an appropriate method for examining existing policy documents, legislative frameworks, and official reports to assess the risks associated with university reliance on government funding. This approach will enable a systematic review of publicly available information without direct data collection from primary sources. Results will be shared with different Institutions and the developed strategies will be explored.

**Keywords:** University funding, government funding, financial risk, academic and political risks.

## — Nurturing new talent: A tailored approach to research management support in low resource settings

**Mr Richard M'madi<sup>1</sup>**, Mrs Laura Kamanga<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

Richard M'madi is the senior research training officer and research methodology lecturer in the department of Lab sciences at the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS). He holds a Masters in Business Administration with a focus on project management from the University of Wales; he also serves as an adjunct lecturer in Strategic Planning at the Malawi School of Government (MSG)

**Introduction:** Malawi faces significant challenges to develop research capacity among health workers to enable them produce evidence that could improve health care delivery through research. Enhancing research capacity using local resources among faculty and health workers could enable quality improvements strengthening the health system. The District Learning Platform (DLP) under the Capacity building for Health Profession Education and Research aims at improving research capacity of early researchers (ECR's) in Malawi. DLP through micro research approach provided participants experiential learning through the inter professional research process. DLP facilitates mentorship, provides sub grants and supports peer reviews of Micro Research Projects. Micro research projects were initiated and led by participants, this is critical considering the limited number of experienced researchers across Malawi.

This study explored the role of research managers to identify capacity building grants in advancing health profession education and research in Malawi, examining current efforts, challenges, and opportunities.

**Methodology:** The Qualitative study involved case studies, five key informant interviews (2 theme leads for DLP sub-theme, 2 early career researchers, and one RSO staff) and desk research. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis in NVIVO.

**Results:** The findings of this study suggest that deliberate efforts to build capacity in resource mobilization and grant writing skills, development of mentorship programs and research training for ECRs' are crucial. Strengthening these, systems will not only ensure ECRs' academic success but will also improve health care delivery, open up avenues for policy innovation. Barriers include; lack of resources, lack of capacity among RM's and political will, the study recommends; enhancing the young researcher forum, training for RM staff, advocacy and networking.

**Conclusion:** Research managers play a significant role in creating a conducive environment for early career researchers to conduct micro research projects and produce evidence that could improve health care delivery in low resource settings.

## — The DVC's Dilemma: Animal research at risk — New compliance mandates trigger institutional shutdowns

**Dr Bert Mohr**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Scientific Veterinary Consulting, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dr Bert Mohr is an internationally recognised veterinary specialist with over 25 years' experience, holds an Oxford PhD and several veterinary degrees, has co-authored African and South African standards and guidelines for animal research governance, chaired and served on international and national councils in the veterinary and animal research sectors, received multiple awards as Professor of Veterinary Medicine, and served as Director of the largest academic centre for animal research in Africa. He is the founder and CEO of Scientific Veterinary Consulting, a specialist firm which establishes robust governance systems for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

Recent regulatory changes in South Africa's animal research compliance landscape — SANS 10386:2021 Standards and NDoH 2024 Guidelines — have introduced significant risks for research institutions. These shifts place the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research (DVC: Research) at the centre of institutional compliance, designating them as the Institutional Official ultimately responsible for the entire institutional animal care and use programme. With this designation comes heightened reputational, legal, financial, and operational risks, including potential research disruptions with non-compliance.

One of the most urgent changes is the requirement for an independent external assessment of institutional operation at least every four years, with the first mandatory assessments due by the end of 2025. Many institutions remain unprepared, operating under outdated policies, misaligned Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) structures, and inadequate compliance frameworks. Regulatory interventions have already led to the closure of over 20% of South African animal research facilities.

This presentation outlines the Ethical Compliance Blueprint (TM), a structured, strategic approach to mitigating institutional risk, strengthening animal research governance, and ensuring regulatory compliance. The Blueprint is built on four strategic pillars:

1. PROTECT – Safeguarding institutional values, managing reputational risks, and ensuring compliance to uphold research integrity.
2. POSITION – Preparing for independent external assessments and audits, building capacity through specialised training, and establishing robust policy frameworks.
3. PERFORM – Enhancing institutional systems, refining efficiency and workflows, and strengthening workforce resilience to maintain compliance in high-pressure environments.
4. PROGRESS – Fostering effective communication strategies, cultivating a culture of ethical compliance, and strengthening leadership-driven accountability.

With multiple South African institutions already facing serious operational and reputational crises, this session will provide practical insights and strategic solutions to help research leaders navigate these challenges, ensure compliance, and future-proof their institutions.

## — Agility in research management: Navigating diverse stakeholders to drive project success

### **Ms Bontle Moleme**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Wits Commercial Enterprise (Pty) Ltd, Johannesburg, South Africa

#### **Biography:**

Bontle Moleme with more than six years of experience in research administration. Currently completing my degree in Project Management with Mancosa.

Wits Enterprise is involved with the coordination of a project with the purpose to acquire high-resolution 2D seismic reflection and complementary geophysical data.

A key focus of the project is knowledge transfer and skills development, which includes training customer staff, university students, and local community members in data acquisition, processing, and interpretation. This initiative aims to build capacity and enhance South Africa's energy research and resource evaluation capabilities.

This project, more than any other, demanded innovative and agile research management practices; to tackle its complexity. This was addressed by forming a dedicated, multidisciplinary team, supported by an experienced commercial project manager from the outset to ensure effective execution and successful outcomes. This shift highlights the benefits derived from a proactive, collaborative, and strategic approach to project management.

This shift has transformed how we work. By breaking down silos and encouraging cross-unit collaboration, team members now lean on one another's strengths rather than waiting for direction from a single individual. This has not only enhanced efficiency but also built resilience within the team. When one member is unavailable, others seamlessly step in, ensuring continuity and momentum.

This presentation looks to examine the power of agility to enable rapid adaptation, efficient resource deployment, and impactful outcomes. The lessons learned not only advance this initiative but also set a precedent for future projects within our organisation and beyond, demonstrating the power of collaboration, adaptability, and trust-building in overcoming complex challenges.

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## — Transforming ideas into market-ready products: The role of PDTs in innovation and entrepreneurship

**Ms Shelly Mona**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Central University of Technology: Product Development Technology Station, Bloemfontein, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Shelly Mona is the Deputy Director at the Product Development Technology Station (PDTs), Central University of Technology, Free State, and a PhD candidate at the University of Johannesburg. She is a registered Professional Engineering Technologist with the Engineering Council of South Africa. Shelly holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering technology and a master's degree in engineering management. She also holds certificates in project management and production and operations management. Her professional experience spans product development, quality engineering, and maintenance engineering. Shelly's research interests include product development, additive manufacturing, and system dynamics modeling.

The journey from concept to commercialization is a major challenge for innovators, SMEs, and researchers, often hindered by resource constraints, technical complexities, and regulatory requirements. The Product Development Technology Station (PDTs) at the Central University of Technology, Free State, serves as a critical enabler in the research and development ecosystem, providing end-to-end support to transform innovative ideas into market-ready products.

PDTs employs a structured, multidisciplinary approach across five specialized departments: Medical Device Product Development, Product Development, Advanced Machining and Tooling, Advanced Sheet Metal and Tubing, and Graphic Design and Branding. This integrated model facilitates product design, prototyping, production, and intellectual property (IP) protection, addressing key gaps in the innovation pipeline.

Through its innovation-driven methodologies, PDTs has successfully accelerated the commercialization of multiple products, enhanced industry competitiveness, and contributed to economic growth. This presentation explores how PDTs bridges the gap between research and market adoption, highlighting key strategies, collaborative frameworks, and lessons learned. By showcasing PDTs's role in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, this discussion will provide insights into best practices for technology transfer, commercialization, and sustainable impact in the research and development ecosystem.

## — Navigating disruptions in research management: Evaluating in-house vs. vendor-supported systems

**Mr Keoagile Mosala**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UNISA, Tshawane, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Keoagile Mosala is a Research Information Officer and System Administrator at the University of South Africa, specialising in research management systems, grants administration, and research ethics administrator. With extensive experience in configuring and optimizing digital platforms, he plays a key role in enhancing institutional workflows for research support. Keoagile has contributed to the integration of Ethics, and Grants systems, ensuring alignment with institutional policies and regulatory frameworks. A skilled PHP and MySQL developer, he advocates for digital transformation in academic research.

In a world where research institutions are increasingly dependent on digital infrastructure to support their research management activities, system disruptions, inefficiencies, and financial issues are typical and are due to the use of multiple external providers. These challenges raise a key question for research managers: Are institutions better off building their own Research Management System (RMS), or should they continue to use off-the-shelf solutions? This conceptual analysis explores the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches, emphasizing the complexities of ensuring system stability, institutional control, and long-term sustainability.

Most institutions depend on commercial research management solutions and have integrated systems like Research Outputs system, Research Ethics management systems, the NRF system, and Grant Management System tools. However, external reliance is often accompanied by operational disruptions, for instance, when unmet licensing fees or vendor support is lacking. The other alternative, a self-developed, institution-owned RMS, is flexible, financially independent, and easily integrated with internal processes. However, it entails the institution's buy-in, resources, and commitment in the long run.

This discussion compares both options based on cost, control, flexibility, and compliance. It applies the Technology Acceptance Model to assess user adoption and Total Cost of Ownership analysis to evaluate long-term costs while addressing data security, ethics, and legal compliance, including the General Data Protection Regulation, Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), and institutional policies.

Research managers' and administrators' expertise positions them ideally to help institutions evaluate the benefits and challenges of selecting a custom-built versus a pre-existing research Management System (RMS). Commercial systems offer ready-made solutions but pose risks like licensing costs and vendor reliance. In-house systems provide flexibility but require substantial resources. A thorough evaluation, stakeholder engagement, and management support ensure stability and adaptability to future developments.

## — Strategic partnerships in international research collaborations - A case study in Malawi

**Mr Palinji Mungoni**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

A research management professional with 15 years of experience in research support, working as a grants accountant, grants compliance officer, and finance manager projects.

I have a bachelor of business administration (2009), an MSc in Financial Services Management (2016), and an MSc in Research Administration (2020).

An ESSENCE and UKCDR Good Practice Document titled “Four approaches to supporting equitable research partnerships” includes the need to invest in research management under approach number 2. Public universities in sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly seen as hubs for knowledge generation, which is essential in informing policies to address the numerous challenges the continent faces.

Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS) and the University of Glasgow have established a strategic partnership, building the capacity of KUHeS on several fronts. The partnership has supported the strengthening of governance structures through exchange programs of senior leadership to learn from each institution. By exploring this partnership and the drive towards equitable partnerships, we will rethink the changing face of collaborations.

Activities have involved supporting the development of governance tools including policies, guidelines, and the organizational structure. This has helped to position the KUHeS as a center of academy excellence and capable of collaborating on research with universities across the world.

Further initiatives of this partnership included the establishment of a world-class laboratory aimed at mirroring a lab facility at the University of Glasgow to encourage researchers at the two institutions to carry out collaborative, comparative research projects. The project also strengthened South-South collaborations by extending the lab project to the University of Zambia. These labs are owned and operated by the institutions and are open to all researchers to run their lab projects through.

Enhancement of research management capabilities has been embedded in the partnership, targeting financial reporting mechanisms and training (e.g. the “Research Managers and Administrators Workshop” in Tanzania, and developing an application to the British Academy’s ODA Research Management Capacity Strengthening Programme.

These activities in this strategic partnership have developed the research management capacity at KUHeS and promoted the understanding and establishment of equitable research collaborations.



## — Enhancing postgraduate throughput and nurturing future researchers: The role of research management administrators at NUST

**Ms Rennie Munyayi**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Anna Matros-Goreses<sup>1</sup>, Prof Omotayo Awofolu<sup>1</sup>, **Prof Colin Stanley**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia

### **Biography:**

Rennie Munyayi is the Manager: Postgraduate at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), where she drives postgraduate policy development, throughput improvement, and supervisor capacity enhancement. With over a decade of experience in research management, postgraduate support, and monitoring and evaluation, Rennie works closely with faculties and leadership to strengthen postgraduate systems and student success. Her interests include research capacity development, institutional policy reform, and postgraduate support innovation. Rennie actively contributes to regional research management networks and advocates for evidence-based strategies to enhance postgraduate education and cultivate the next generation of researchers in Namibia and beyond.

Postgraduate throughput rates continue to pose a serious challenge for higher education institutions across Southern Africa, with low completion rates, extended time-to-degree, and high attrition threatening the development of the next generation of researchers. While attention has often focused on the roles of supervisors and students, the critical contributions of Research Management Administrators (RMAs) and Innovation & Technology Transfer (I&TT) professionals in creating enabling environments for postgraduate success remain underexplored.

This paper presents findings from an institutional study at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), which assesses key bottlenecks to postgraduate throughput and examines the evolving role of the Directorate of Research, Innovation, and Partnerships (DRIP) in supporting postgraduate success at NUST. A mixed-methods approach was applied, combining analysis of postgraduate throughput and attrition data, institutional policies, and administrative processes with qualitative insights gathered from postgraduate students, supervisors, DRIP, and faculty leadership.

The study also integrated a co-creation workshop convened with NUST Executive Management, Executive Deans, Associate Deans, Heads of Departments, and Postgraduate Coordinators. This collaborative platform allowed institutional leadership and the RMA (DRIP) to validate findings, map institutional pain points, and co-design strategies to enhance postgraduate throughput and strengthen RMA-led support systems.

The findings highlight DRIPs' pivotal role in streamlining administrative processes, facilitating access to funding, ensuring regulatory compliance, and delivering targeted capacity-building and mentoring initiatives. Strengthened collaboration between DRIP, supervisors, and institutional leadership, along with tailored capacity development for DRIP staff, is recommended to enhance research management systems and cultivate a supportive research environment for early-career researchers.

This paper aligns with Theme 1: Cultivating Potential by demonstrating how RMAs and I&TT professionals serve as enablers in nurturing postgraduate researchers, strengthening research capacity, and fostering a culture of research excellence and innovation.

## — Challenges in commercialising non-patentable IP in collaborative environments

**Dr Zenzele Ndlovu**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CSIR, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dr. Ndlovu is a seasoned commercialization professional, currently serving as a Commercialization Manager at CSIR's Smart Society division. She holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from Cape Peninsula University of Technology and a PGDip in Management Practice from UCT-GSB. Currently pursuing an LLB at UKZN. Her career spans roles at the TIA, UWC, SAMRC, SAVANT, KNIFE CAPITAL, and Wits. Dr. Ndlovu has extensive experience in IP management, technology transfer, and business incubation. Passionate about mentorship and entrepreneurship, she bridges the gap between innovative research and marketable products, driving sustainable technological advancements for a better future.

Commercialization of non-patentable intellectual property (IP) presents unique challenges, particularly for public institutions engaged in collaborative research with external parties. This abstract explores the multifaceted issues encountered in such scenarios, focusing on the difficulties in protecting and monetizing non-patentable IP, the risks associated with poorly documented trade secrets, know-how, etc. and the potential for IP infringement leading to litigation. Non-patentable IP, such as algorithms, business methods, and proprietary data, often lacks the formal protection afforded by patents, making it vulnerable to unauthorized use and difficult to commercialize. Public institutions, which frequently collaborate with external entities, face additional hurdles in protecting these assets. The absence of clear documentation and robust trade secret management practices exacerbates these challenges, leading to potential misappropriation and loss of competitive advantage.

Collaborative environments further complicate IP management. When multiple parties contribute to the development of IP, establishing clear ownership and usage rights becomes critical. Ambiguities in these agreements can lead to disputes and hinder commercialisation efforts. Moreover, the likelihood of IP infringement increases, as collaborators may inadvertently or deliberately misuse the shared IP. Public institutions, in particular, encounter significant obstacles in enforcing their IP rights. Litigation is often costly and time-consuming, and public entities may lack the resources and expertise to effectively pursue legal action. Additionally, the public nature of these institutions can attract scrutiny and complicate legal proceedings.

The proposed oral presentation will delve into these challenges and offer insights into best practices for documenting trade secrets, structuring collaborative agreements, and navigating the complexities of IP litigation. We believe that, addressing these issues, public institutions including HEIs and SCs can better protect their non-patentable IP and enhance their ability to commercialize innovative solutions.

## — It is not easy, but when it works it is great!

**Mrs Anita Nel**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Anita is the Chief Director: Innovation and Commercialisation at Stellenbosch University and the CEO of University of Stellenbosch Enterprises (Pty) Ltd. Anita serves on the global Alliance of Technology Transfer Professionals adjudication panels for registered technology transfer professional applications as well as training course reviews. She holds several directorships on boards of technology companies.

After spending time in industry, Anita joined Innovus, the TTO of Stellenbosch University. She established the LaunchLab business incubator and initiated the University Technology Fund.

Anita's role was expanded to include the university's commercial division which is responsible for non-research based commercial activities of the university.

A TTO at a research institution faces many challenges. Firstly, it is often seen as an uncomfortable unit within the institution. Management expects the TTO to generate revenue but instead, it costs the institution money. The TTO is also often accused of complicating research agreements with unnecessary IP ownership and commercialisation clauses. Commercialising technology is far more complex and costly than it may seem and finding qualified and experienced staff for the office is not easy. Once the research has been proven the institution hardly wants to spend time and money on the further development of the invention. To complicate matters further, technology transfer success is sometimes disguised and not easily recognisable.

This presentation will focus on some of the TTO's challenges and how to manage these, but it will also celebrate the many successes!

## — Exploring entrepreneurship and innovation dynamics in research and development: A comparative case study analysis

**Dr Daniel Nheta<sup>1</sup>, Dr Colene Hind<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of South Africa, Midrand, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dr Daniel is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL) at the University of South Africa (UNISA). His research interests are in the field of Entrepreneurship. His PhD research led to the development of the Entrepreneurship Gaps Framework (EGF) model, an innovative diagnostic tool designed to assess the psychological challenges encountered by emerging entrepreneurs. The EGF model offers tailored recommendations to address challenges emerging entrepreneurs face, thereby enhancing the entrepreneurial development process at the early stages of business creation. His academic interests extend to collaborative research, and he is open to potential interdisciplinary partnerships.

Entrepreneurship has been ostensibly viewed as an avenue of reimagining Research and Development (“R&D”) at universities, private sector, and government bodies. The underlying factors influencing entrepreneurship have anchored interest in understanding how they drive R&D. This presentation seeks to divulge the dynamics at play in fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in R&D. South African case studies such as university-industry partnerships, policy, and the commercialization of research will be explored to unearth trends and industry-related practices. It is expected that through the review of five local case studies, specific issues affecting attempts at driving Entrepreneurship and Innovation in R&D will be identified. By applying a comparative analysis approach to the case studies, best practices enhancing entrepreneurship and innovation in R&D will be identified and collated. It is expected that through a thematic analysis, insights into the evolution of R&D will be fathomed. The outcome of this presentation is directed to universities, research institutes, and policymakers as it is anticipated to be of value in supporting collaborative research commercialization efforts. Conclusively, the recommendations are envisaged to strengthen the synergies between stakeholders and universities for entrepreneurship and innovation in R&D.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Research, Innovation, Universities, South Africa

## — Building resilient financial research administration: Navigating disruptions through agile research management

**Mrs Carin Niemand<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Carin Niemand, Research Management Professional (RMP), is a seasoned Research Financial Administrator specializing in financial research management, grant administration, and compliance. Since joining UNISA in 2011, she has streamlined financial reporting, developed policies, and enhanced researcher support. As a leader in the Financial Research Administration and Management Community of Practice (FRAM-COP), she advocates for collaboration and best practices. At SARIMA 2025, Carin will present "Cultivating Resilient Financial Research Management Systems for Agility and Impact," highlighting strategies for navigating funding uncertainties, improving compliance, and integrating sustainable financial practices to strengthen research institutions.

In an era of rapid change, research management professionals must adapt to unexpected disruptions while ensuring the sustainability and efficiency of research administration. Financial research administration, in particular, faces evolving funding landscapes, regulatory shifts, and the increasing demand for transparency and compliance. Traditional financial management structures often struggle to accommodate these dynamic challenges, requiring research managers to develop agile, responsive strategies that safeguard research funding and optimize institutional resources.

This presentation explores how research management professionals can build resilience within financial research administration by leveraging adaptive frameworks, collaborative networks, and digital solutions. Drawing from the establishment of the Financial Research Administration-Management Community of Practice (FRAM-COP) at SARIMA, this session will present practical insights into fostering agility in research finance, enhancing governance structures, and mitigating risks associated with grant management.

### **Key discussion points include:**

- **Agility in Research Finance:** Strategies to navigate budgetary uncertainties, shifting funding priorities, and institutional constraints.
- **Collaboration & Community Building:** The role of FRAM-COP in strengthening knowledge-sharing, best practices, and collective problem-solving in research finance.
- **Technology & Digital Transformation:** Leveraging AI, automated reporting tools, and cloud-based financial systems to enhance efficiency.
- **Risk Mitigation & Compliance:** Ensuring financial sustainability through improved governance frameworks and proactive risk management.

By fostering an agile financial research administration environment, research managers can better support researchers, maximize funding impact, and strengthen institutional resilience. This session will offer actionable recommendations and real-world examples to equip research management professionals with the tools needed to expect the unexpected and drive sustainable research excellence.

## — Evaluating South African TTO capabilities through the Technology Transfer Professionals (TTP) capability framework

**Ms Mashudu Nxumalo**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Mashudu has over six years of experience in Technology Transfer within a South African university and two state entities in the nuclear energy and agriculture sectors.

As part of Stellenbosch University's Technology Transfer Office, she plays a key role in the commercialization of the university's intellectual property. Her expertise includes patenting, licensing, and the formation of spin-out companies, working closely with a dedicated team to drive innovation from research to market.

Mashudu holds a BSc in Microbiology and a BSc Honours from the University of Limpopo. She earned her MSc in Microbiology from the University of Pretoria.

Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) in publicly financed institutions in South Africa play a crucial role in transforming academic research into commercial products or services. However, their effectiveness largely depends on the capabilities of their Technology Transfer Professionals (TTP), which varies across institutions. To ensure that TTO performs effectively, it is essential to assess these capabilities against internationally recognized competency frameworks.

The Technology Transfer Professionals (TTP) Capability Framework, developed by Knowledge Commercialisation Australasia (KCA), offers a structured approach to evaluating the skills and expertise required for successful technology transfer. Despite its relevance, there is limited research on how South African TTOs align with this framework and whether existing competency gaps may hinder their TTO success. This presentation aims to assess the capabilities of South African TTOs using the KCA TTP Capability Framework from data collected through online surveys with TTPs from South African publicly financed institutions, with a focus on identifying strengths and gaps. The findings will motivate the professionalisation of TTPs in South Africa and establish recommendations on how to enhance TTO functions by strengthening its team's capabilities, with the ultimate goal of improving South Africa's university research commercialization pipeline.

This presentation is highly relevant as it addresses the critical role of Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) in South Africa's research commercialization landscape. By benchmarking TTO capabilities against the KCA TTP Capability Framework, this study provides novel insights into competency gaps and strengths, which have not been systematically assessed in the local context. The findings will offer actionable recommendations to enhance TTO effectiveness, support professional development, and strengthen South Africa's innovation ecosystem. This research contributes to the global discourse on technology transfer professionalization, ensuring alignment with international best practices

## — Beyond citations: A strategic framework for measuring research impact in African Universities

**Prof Abdulkarim Oloyede<sup>1</sup>**, Prof Wahab Egbewole<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

### **Biography:**

Abdulkarim Oloyede is a Professor of Wireless Telecommunications and the Director of the Centre for Research, Development, and In-House Training (CREDIT) at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. An expert in spectrum management, broadband connectivity, cognitive radio, and digital transformation. Prof. Oloyede holds a Ph.D. in Electronic Engineering (Telecommunications) from the University of York, UK, and has served as a consultant to the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and other international organizations. His research focuses on wireless networks, and ICT policy development. He has published extensively and actively involved in capacity building, policy advocacy, and digital research ecosystem development across Africa

The increasing demand for research impact assessment has exposed the limitations of traditional metrics such as citation counts and journal impact factors. While these indicators measure academic influence, they often fail to capture real-world applications in policy, industry, and societal development. As global university rankings increasingly incorporate broader impact measures, African institutions must adopt metrics that reflect both local and global priorities to appropriately assess and enhance their research contributions.

This paper presents a theoretical framework designed to help African universities systematically measure research impact while improving their positioning in global rankings. While we acknowledge the limitations of existing impact ranking methodologies, there is a need for African institutions to develop contextually relevant metrics that align with both regional development needs and international standards. The proposed framework evaluates research performance across five key dimensions:

- **Research Productivity and Funding Success:** Ensuring sustained research output, grant acquisition, and financial sustainability.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Global Engagement:** Measuring regional and international partnerships to enhance visibility and influence.
- **Commercialization and Innovation Impact:** Assessing patents, industry linkages, and knowledge transfer to support economic growth.
- **Policy and Societal Influence:** Evaluating contributions to national policies, community development, and Africa's socio-economic transformation.
- **Digital Accessibility and Open Science:** Strengthening research dissemination through open-access platforms and digital repositories.

By integrating these impact metrics, African universities can better demonstrate their research value, attract funding, and enhance their global rankings without compromising local relevance. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for institutions, ranking bodies, and funding agencies, advocating for a more inclusive and context-sensitive research assessment model that recognizes Africa's unique research ecosystem and development priorities.



## — Industry clusters: Scaling social capital and serving regional strengths for research and spinout success.

**Mr Brandon Paschal**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Brandon is the Deputy Director: Spinout Companies and Funds at Stellenbosch University and heads up SU's LaunchLab. He has been part of the SU LaunchLab world for the last 10 years. Prior to that, he was on the founding team of a leadership development NGO at universities in Johannesburg and was part of a tech company that exited to UK-based group WPP.

Social capital is the greatest need for an early-stage startup. Social capital helps you navigate how to land a product with your customer, grow your sales, raise capital, and expand internationally. Most entrepreneur programmes focus on administration like finances, contracts, IP, etc. These are all necessary, but they don't grow the business. Also, making once-off connections per company has some value, but it doesn't multiply value going forward.

We will unpack how Stellenbosch University established a business network organisation, and is building industry innovation clusters around institutional and regional strengths that bridges the social capital gap in repeated ways, brings local industry together (Cape Agritech Connect), and connects our companies to international markets.

## — Systems thinking in tech yransfer: The 5W2H method

**Mr Letlotlo Phohole**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg | Braamfontein, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Letlotlo Phohole is a distinguished leader in innovation management, currently serving as the Director of the Wits Innovation Centre (WIC). With a rich background spanning over 25 years in technology and innovation management across diverse sectors including academia, government, industry and as a techno-entrepreneur, Letlotlo is at the forefront of promoting research-led and student-led innovation at Wits. His academic achievements are notable, holding an MSc in Technology and Innovation Management (Patent Intelligence), and currently pursuing doctoral studies. His expertise in systems engineering and technology management has been pivotal in supporting startup development and applying systems thinking to complex problems

This presentation explores the application of the 5W2H method as a systems thinking tool in the idea registration and invention disclosure processes within technology transfer functions. Incorporating 'Who,' 'What,' 'When,' 'Where,' 'Why,' 'How,' and 'How Much,' this method enhances strategic management from the initial stages of idea registration to the complex phases of invention disclosure.

By using the 5W2H method, we provide a structured framework that simplifies the registration process, which is often perceived by researchers as less intimidating compared to the formal invention disclosure. This methodical approach helps to mitigate the complexity and perceived challenges of invention disclosures, encouraging more robust participation from researchers and ensuring that only thoroughly vetted and viable ideas proceed to the disclosure stage.

The systematic nature of the 5W2H method aligns perfectly with the SARIMA 2025 conference theme of "Leveraging Systems and Emerging Technologies for Research, Innovation & Technology Transfer Management." It demonstrates how systems thinking can streamline technology transfer activities, ensuring that innovations are effectively managed and aligned with strategic goals. This presentation will detail how the 5W2H method not only facilitates smoother transitions from concept to market but also enhances decision-making and resource allocation, which are crucial for managing unexpected challenges in research and technology transfer.

## — Guarding innovation: Strategic interplay between patents and confidential know-how

**Mr Danie Pienaar**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Spoor & Fisher, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Danie is a patent attorney and partner at Spoor & Fisher, and has a BEng (Elec) cum laude and an LLB. Danie has over 15 years of experience in the drafting and prosecution of electronic- and software-related inventions.

In the dynamic landscape of research and development, safeguarding innovation is paramount. This presentation will delve into the strategic interplay between patent protection and the maintenance of technical information as confidential know-how. By exploring the complementary roles of patents and know-how, we will uncover how organizations can effectively balance these two intellectual property mechanisms to maximize their competitive advantage.

Patents provide a legal framework for protecting novel inventions, offering exclusive rights that can be leveraged for commercial gain. However, the public disclosure requirement of patents may not always align with an organization's strategic interests. In contrast, know-how allows for the indefinite protection of valuable technical information without the need for disclosure, but they require robust measures to ensure confidentiality.

By understanding the strategic interplay between patents and confidential know-how, attendees will gain insights into how to navigate this complex field in order to help drive future innovation.

## — Strengthening University-Industry linkages toward knowledge and technology transfer: A case study of Eduardo Mondlane University

**Mr Uaite Primeiro<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique

### **Biography:**

Uaite Primeiro holds a master's degree in Educational Management and Policy. For the past ten years, he has served as a Research Support Officer at the Scientific Directorate of Eduardo Mondlane University. He plays a key role in facilitating the scientific activities, including managing research funding requests, overseeing research dissemination, and drafting research regulatory documents. Recently, he was appointed as a science communication strategist and team leader, working to establish regulations and frameworks for grants, science communication and technology transfer. On an international level, he supports stakeholder engagement and enhances the university's institutional visibility based on research outputs.

Studies on University-Industry Linkages (UILs) have increasingly become a significant focus of research in Education in recent years. Among other factors, the literature highlights UILs' contribution to the economic development of countries. This benefit, as evidenced in developed countries where UILs are extensively explored, has attracted the attention of researchers from developing countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria and South Africa have shown considerable interest in UILs, while other countries appear under-researched or display less interest in this area. Mozambique, for instance, is characterized by a low visibility of UILs. This qualitative research is based on a case study of Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) and explores people's experiences to understand the reasons influencing the current state of UILs, the needs of stakeholders, and how both the university and stakeholders can identify opportunities for effective Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KTT). Twelve participants were selected through stratified, random, purposive, and snowball sampling methods, with seven representing the University and five representing industry. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Using a General Inductive Approach, the study concluded that several factors have shaped the development of UILs, including discontinuities in research activity, lack of interest from university leadership, insufficient government involvement, inadequate university preparedness, and trust and firms' culture. Regarding stakeholders' needs, institutional goals, funding, rethinking state budget and policy emerged as the primary concerns. To identify opportunities for effective KTT, the study suggests fostering constructive dialogue between industry and academia, along with establishing an institutional interface that brings together all stakeholders to share information. In addition to fostering dialogue between academia and industry, the presentation will propose solutions to challenges in technology transfer engagement, and offer actionable strategies that institutions in similar contexts can implement, benefiting both researchers and policymakers.

**Keywords:** University-Industry Linkages, Knowledge Transfer, Technology Transfer

## — Implementing strategies to increase the pool for research funding

**Dr Bas Rijnen**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia

### **Biography:**

Dr Bas Rijnen is seasoned grants manager with over 20 years of experiences in both pre- and post-award, for multiple donors. Bas is currently working as a Projects Coordinator at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. Bas has presented at SARIMA conferences on north-south research collaborations (2019), Research Information Management Systems (2020), The Challenges and Considerations of International Project Collaboration (2021) and local knowledge creation (2022). He holds a master's in organisation anthropology at Utrecht University and a PhD in Sport Management at the University of Johannesburg.

Over the past years the research management environment has been showing some changes. There is a trend of developing more complex and diverse research networks. Funding opportunities have also become more diverse as agencies are also having more and more funding opportunities that cannot be directly earmarked as research funding but do provide opportunities for the researcher and the institution.

This provides an opportunity for the research manager to implement intentional strategies and enlarge the pool for research funding which is especially relevant in context where there is limited research funding available.

I will be showcasing how the research manager can drive research focus areas by implementing intentional strategies, set up networks and acquire funds that are principally focused on projects and grants that are not typically earmarked as research funding.

I will firstly provide an overview of the grant management portfolio of the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and make a distinction between research and non-research earmarked funds. I will then go into some specific cases where non-research earmarked funds were targeted and show how this supported the research environment.

I hereby stress the importance of creating a holistic and equitable collaboration framework that spans both intra- and extramural levels, involving not only researchers but research managers as well but also other non-research-focused stakeholders such as private sector and other educational institutions and governmental institutions. This is aligned with the emerging trend of research for impact. Hereby stressing that in an environment where there is less funding for research, research activities can be embedded in wider frameworks. I will further provide lessons learnt on these approaches.

## — Essential first steps for new research managers in African Universities

**Mrs Sylvia Antwiwaah Sarbah<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

### **Biography:**

Sylvia Antwiwaah Sarbah is a Research Development Officer at the University of Ghana with extensive experience in higher education administration. Currently, she manages the University of Ghana Graduate Research Fund and provides grants management services at the College of Education. Previously, she served as Personal Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana. Sylvia holds a Master of Public Administration from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and a B.A. in English from the University of Ghana. She is a member of ARMA and actively contributes to the professionalization of research management in African higher education.

Professionalizing research management roles in African higher education institutions comes with its own challenges, particularly as these institutions strive to enhance research output and strengthen global competitiveness. This article addresses the critical question; "What strategic development pathways should newly appointed research managers pursue to establish sustainable careers and build institutional capacity?" The study analyzed the results of a survey of 40 research managers across eight African universities and in-depth interviews with 10 experienced research management professionals, after which four essential career development domains were identified: governance knowledge, technical competencies, relational intelligence, and strategic visioning capabilities. The findings reveal a significant gap in formal onboarding processes, with 68% of new research managers receiving a minimally structured orientation before taking up the role. The study proposed a three-phase professional development agenda that aligns personal career advancement with institutional needs as follows:

1. Foundational Competency Building
2. Specialized skill development
3. Leadership positioning.

The presentation will outline practical implementation strategies, including mentorship programs, competency certification pathways, and cross-institutional collaborative networks, which have effectively accelerated professional development. This research advances the discourse on professionalizing research management by offering strategic career development insights for individuals entering this critical university function while guiding institutions in supporting their new research managers.

## — View from the top: Academic leaders' insights on the challenges ahead

**Ms Lucia Schoombee<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Elsevier, Somerset West, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Lucia Schoombee is a research analytics specialist with Elsevier based in Cape Town, South Africa. Her work focuses on the optimization and application of research metrics, supporting evidence-based decision-making in research management. She has contributed to studies on research assessment and regularly teaches on the use of analytical tools in higher education and policy contexts. Lucia holds an MPhil in Science and Technology Studies from Stellenbosch University and is currently a PhD candidate, researching the intersection of science and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Universities operate in an increasingly complex environment, where the ability to adapt research management strategies is critical. This study, based on interviews with university leaders globally, examines the most pressing challenges in research, the extent of institutional preparedness, and regional differences in response.

While priorities such as research excellence, financial sustainability, and talent acquisition remain central, the pressures surrounding them are evolving. Institutions must demonstrate societal impact, navigate shifting funding landscapes, and compete globally for expertise—all while responding to rapid technological, regulatory, and demographic changes. The scale of these challenges varies across regions, influencing how universities approach long-term sustainability and strategic decision-making.

Despite a clear understanding of these pressures, institutional readiness does not always align with the urgency of the issues at hand. Leaders are considering new approaches, from alternative funding models to cross-sector collaborations, but gaps remain between recognition and action. Understanding these dynamics is key to developing more agile research management environments.

By examining global trends and regional differences, this study provides insights that can help universities in Southern Africa anticipate challenges and adapt successful strategies to their own contexts. While institutional priorities may differ, the lessons from a broader international perspective can inform policy decisions, funding strategies, and capacity-building efforts, strengthening research management in the region.



## — Enhancing research ethics processes through digital transformation: A case study from Research Systems at UCT

**Mrs Tina Seale<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Melissa Abrahams<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Tina is a Senior ICT Manager with over 5 years of experience supporting research management at the University of Cape Town. With a 20-year career in ICT within higher education, she specialises in information systems, digital transformation, ICT strategy, and driving technology-enabled solutions to enhance operational efficiency. She collaborates with stakeholders to implement strategic initiatives that improve research support services. Tina holds a MCom in Information Systems, is a Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA), and recently completed an Executive MBA from UCT GSB. She is passionate about empowering women in the ICT field.

The successful implementation of the Converis, electronic Research Administration (eRA), Ethics Management project at the University of Cape Town marks a significant advancement in streamlining ethics processes. The eRA system supports digital transformation by enhancing research governance and operational efficiency. Led by the Office of Research Integrity, with support from Research Systems within the Research Office and ICTS, this initiative was successfully concluded in December 2024. It adopted the UKZN Converis ethics configuration to align with UCT's institutional needs while maintaining a streamlined, risk-based workflow across faculties.

The Research Systems team played a central role in enabling this transformation, providing expertise in supporting the system configuration, user training, first-level support, and governance. Beyond supporting technical implementation, they facilitated faculty-wide engagement, senior leadership collaboration, and continuous improvement efforts post-implementation. This case study highlights the strategic role of research systems in driving sustainable digital transformation, engaging key stakeholders, ensuring compliance, and fostering a more agile research management environment.

This presentation will provide practical insights on system adoption, change management, and stakeholder engagement, offering a replicable model for institutions navigating the evolving demands of ethics review processes. Attendees will gain actionable strategies for overcoming challenges in research system implementations, fostering institutional buy-in, and optimising digital tools to support ethics management. The session will benefit research administrators, ICT professionals, and institutional leaders looking to enhance governance and operational efficiency through digital transformation.

## — Streamlining technology transfer and startup creation: The instant TTO and instant startup platforms

**Mrs Nolene Singh<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Doris Peters<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Nolene Singh is the Deputy Director of Technology Transfer at Stellenbosch University (SU). She is responsible for the management and commercialisation of SU's IP through patenting, licensing and the formation of spin-out companies.

Nolene is a registered technology transfer professional with over eight years' of experience in technology transfer and innovation. She is a director for LES SA and SU's spin-out companies SharkSafe Barriers, Phynti, Banzifeet and Immobazyme. She also serves as second director for SU companies BioCODE Technologies, Phagoflux, Cybarete and Nanosene.

She is passionate about creating impactful partnerships that benefit both the academic community and the broader society

Innovation and entrepreneurship are pivotal in the R&D ecosystem, driving technological advancements and economic growth. Universities play a crucial role in driving innovation and entrepreneurship within the R&D ecosystem through Technology Transfer (TT) activities and the creation of spin-out companies.

Stellenbosch University (SU) has developed two innovative digital tools, the Instant TTO and the Instant Startup, to support institutions in driving innovation and entrepreneurship. The Instant TTO facilitates the commercialization of research by providing a streamlined online process for managing and licensing intellectual property step by step. The team used their combined decades of TT experience to develop a model to ensure efficient and effective commercialisation of SU innovation. The process includes tools and methods to enable even inexperienced team members to become successful with TT and commercialisation.

The Instant Startup platform offers comprehensive support for TTO staff to create spin-out companies. The outcomes through a guided entrepreneurship education process include customer identification and validation, business proposal and pitch deck development, setting up and populating an investor data room to name a few. The Instant Startup provides resources such as explanatory videos and articles, voice overs and training to empower entrepreneurs to progress through their curated startup journey which is offered in modules tailored to address the critical phases of starting up or spinning out.

These tools are designed to empower TT professionals and Entrepreneurs to transform ideas into successful commercial outputs such as licenses and formation of new ventures. This presentation will take you through the Instant TTO and Instant Start-up to demonstrate the value of these tools to I&TT. These tools are aimed to enable local and international universities, science councils, and private organisation that currently lack innovation, commercialisation, and technology transfer expertise, to upskill their staff and establish the processes and competencies required for successful innovation, commercialisation, and TT.

## — Navigating the ethical and legal landscape of secondary data use in research

**Mrs Naseema Sondag<sup>1</sup>, Ms Eleni Flack-Davison<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa, <sup>2</sup>University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Naseema Sondag is an admitted attorney specialising in intellectual property law. She completed her legal practical training at Webber Wentzel Attorneys and was admitted as an attorney in August 2020. Prior to completing her articles, she worked as a technology transfer professional. She is currently the Deputy Director: Research Contracts & Compliance in the Division for Research Development, Research Contracts Office at Stellenbosch University. This role includes responsibilities of a Senior Legal Advisor and has strategic management responsibilities of the research related compliance function. She is an IREX UASP Research Management Fellow 2024/2025 accredited by George Mason University.

The immense value of human research data in advancing scientific knowledge and commercial innovation is undeniable. Universities and research institutions generate vast repositories of data through clinical trials and collaborative projects. However, the potential of these data extends far beyond their original intended purposes, raising critical questions about their secondary use.

This presentation explores the complex ethical and legal considerations surrounding the secondary use of human research data. We will examine:

1. The untapped potential of existing data repositories;
2. Ethical guidelines governing secondary data use in research;
3. Compliance with evolving data privacy legislation;
4. Authorized parties for data mining and required approvals; and
5. Balancing data protection with scientific progress.

Our discussion will focus on how researchers can ethically and legally leverage human research data for secondary purposes, potentially yielding greater research outcomes than initially envisioned. We will address key challenges, including:

- Ensuring participant privacy and confidentiality;
- Obtaining appropriate consent for secondary use;
- Navigating regulatory frameworks across jurisdictions; and
- Implementing data governance and security measures

By examining case studies and best practices, this presentation aims to provide a roadmap for researchers, research ethics committees, and legal advisors to responsibly harness the full potential of human research data while upholding ethical standards and legal requirements.

## — IP collaboration in Africa: Aligning open access with strategic protection

### **Mr Fredo Ströh<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>KISCH IP, Pretoria, South Africa

#### **Biography:**

Fredo Ströh is a Director at KISCH IP with over 19 years of experience in intellectual property law. He specializes in patents, registered designs, plant breeders' rights, and trademarks, with a strong focus on prosecuting IP applications both locally and internationally. In addition to advising clients on IP portfolio management, enforcement, and commercial transactions, he has worked extensively with research institutions over the years.

A qualified patent attorney since 2012, Fredo brings a comprehensive and strategic approach to IP protection and commercialization, leveraging his expertise across both all field of IP to support innovators and businesses.

Intellectual property (IP) protection plays a crucial role in fostering innovation, attracting investment, and ensuring that researchers benefit from their discoveries. However, in the African context, where equitable access to technology and knowledge is essential for social and economic development, there is a growing shift towards open-access innovation models. Many publicly funded research institutions and universities across Africa are advocating for more flexible IP frameworks to accelerate knowledge transfer, support local industry growth, and enhance the societal impact of research. This shift raises a fundamental question: how can African institutions balance open innovation with the need for strong intellectual property protection and commercialization?

This presentation explores collaborative IP models that allow African researchers, universities, and industries to protect their intellectual assets while fostering knowledge-sharing and commercialization. We will examine key approaches, including:

- Patent pools and shared licensing frameworks that facilitate access to critical technologies while ensuring fair revenue-sharing.
- Open-source and innovation commons models that enable collaborative R&D, particularly in public health, agriculture, and digital technology.
- Public-private partnerships and co-owned IP structures that drive commercialization while maintaining equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms.
- Case studies illustrating how institutions are navigating the tension between IP exclusivity and accessibility.

By addressing the challenges of co-owned IP, licensing strategies, and benefit-sharing, this session will provide a roadmap for research institutions and policymakers to develop IP frameworks that drive both economic growth and social impact. Attendees will gain practical insights into how Africa can leverage hybrid IP models to strengthen commercialization potential, foster innovation, and ensure that research outputs benefit both industry and society at large.

## — The Large Language Models (LLMs) road ahead - Beware the potholes

**Dr Taariq GH Surtee<sup>1</sup>, Ms Eleni Flack-Davison<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Wits University, Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Taariq has a background in mathematical optimisation, technology and theology. He brings experience from these backgrounds to strategically develop solutions to enhance Research Management.

As the Head of eResearch at Wits University, where he provides advanced research management solutions. He oversees research data management, policy formation, and is recognized as a Research Management Professional by the International Professional Recognition Council. Taariq actively engages in research management and supervision, while shaping the university's research technology strategy. He represents Wits University at major initiatives, sharing expertise in cutting edge research technologies, contributing to the field through publications and discussions with sister universities.

Large Language Models (LLMs) have rapidly gained prominence, revolutionizing the way we access and interpret information. They promise comprehensive reviews and intelligent answers based on volumes of data beyond what humans can digest. Users can choose to rely solely on their institution's data or supplement it with information from the vast resources available on the World Wide Web. This capability has attracted students, and professionals who seek to save time and obtain "facts" for their daily tasks.

However, navigating this landscape is not without its challenges (potholes). LLMs are notorious for exhibiting biases, providing inaccurate information, or "hallucinating" when generating responses. They can also be misused to produce content with undesirable implications or violate intellectual property rights by producing outputs that can be attributed to individuals without proper acknowledgement. Furthermore, when LLMs are prompted to be impartial and fair, they often lack the necessary context and fail to apply complex reasoning effectively. Additionally, many LLMs are deemed insecure and require significant computational resources, raising concerns about their accessibility. As LLMs become more entrenched in various domains, particularly in research management, it is crucial to acknowledge these potential potholes.

This presentation aims to share our experiences with LLMs in this context. As a case study, the presenters are developing an online proof of concept LLM that incorporates institutional anonymised ethics data. This LLM will be tasked with analyzing a sample of the institute's ethics data to prepare a report on a new ethics case, offering recommendations to the institution's research ethics committee. Although the body of knowledge is still evolving, this experimental work contributes valuable insights for developing more robust and ethically sound LLM solutions in the future.

## — How do we review that? Generative AI Tools and the Evolution of REC Research Review

**Ms Cassey Toi**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Cassey currently works as the Administrative Assistant: Research Ethics (Social, Behavioural and Education Research) in the Division of Research Development at Stellenbosch University. She has completed multiple postgraduate degrees and is completing a MPhil in Applied Ethics which is aligned with her current professional portfolio in research ethics. She has extensive experience in academic editing and legal newsletter management. Her current professional focus areas are ensuring informed consent in the use of AI tools and advancing data safety practices within AI applications. She is an early-career research manager and is striving to pave her way in the profession.

There is no escaping it, generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools and all the complications it brings are here to stay. The integration of GenAI tools into research presents novel ethics challenges for Research Ethics Committee (REC) reviewers and researchers. Existing ethics frameworks; predominately derived from the biomedical context and often based on assumptions of GenAI tool trustworthiness, may be insufficient for navigating the complexities of GenAI-driven projects. This project examines the limitations of adapting traditional ethics review processes to accommodate GenAI tools, specifically addressing the challenges of informed consent and the right to be forgotten. Looking beyond trust assessments of the tools to explore some of the fundamental questions: are current biomedical-derived ethical frameworks adequate for evaluating research making use of AI tools? Or is a new, tailored approach necessary?

This paper will provide actionable insights for REC reviewers and researchers, aiming to enhance the ethical evaluation and implementation of GenAI tools within research.

## — From teaching to a research University: Narratives of the reform process at Eduardo Mondlane University

**Prof Emílio Tostão**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique

### **Biography:**

Prof. Emílio Tostão is an Associate Professor (2013) and Scientific Director at Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), since 2017. He is also the PEN-Plus Co-researcher and NCDI Southern Africa Hub Coordinator since 2022. Previously, he served as Director of the Research Center for Agricultural and Food Policies and Programmes (2014-2017), Dean of the Faculty of Agronomy and Forestry Engineering (2010-2014). He holds an MSc (2002) and a PhD (2006) in Agricultural Economics from Oklahoma State University (USA). His research focus on agricultural development, quantitative methods for agriculture and Research Management studies.

Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) has embarked in a comprehensive reform process to transform itself from a teaching-led university to a research-led university in search for high societal payoffs in a world increasingly shaped by knowledge economy.

As five of the envisioned 10-year reform process have now elapsed, one key question that needs to be addressed is how effective has the reform process been and what can be learned from it?

Using comparative analysis, this paper provides empirical evidence of reforms in High Education Institutions in Southern Africa by documenting UEM's reform process since its inception in 2018. Key milestones from the Strategic Plan are confronted with both observed data and experiences from select universities in Southern Africa and progress assessed.

The proposed work fits the session on Navigating Disruption: Building Agile Research Management environments, particularly for providing a rich case study from transforming UEM from a teaching-led to a research-led university.

## — Surviving the GFGP maze - A case of Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences

**Dr Madalitso Tsakama**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Limbanazo Matandika<sup>1</sup>, Dr Kondwani Chidziwisano<sup>1</sup>, Mr George Sinjani<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Lucy Moyo<sup>1</sup>, Mr Francis Masi

<sup>1</sup>Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences, Blantyre 3, Malawi

### **Biography:**

Madalitso is the Head of Research and Innovation at MUBAS, leading strategic research initiatives and nurturing innovations as well as academic excellence. A key architect of the Research Support Unit and the University Innovation Pod, he has played a pivotal role in strengthening MUBAS's research ecosystem. He is responsible for driving interdisciplinary collaborations, and translating research into impactful solutions. His expertise spans policy development, researcher support and innovation management. Holding a PhD. in Food Agro-product Quality and Safety, he spearheads interdisciplinary research, advancing MUBAS as a hub for innovation and fostering strong industry-academia partnerships.

Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) accreditation is an important milestone for early-stage universities as a tool for enhancing their credibility and eligibility for various funding opportunities. GFGP is an effective tool for identifying and addressing key organizational risks and for developing institutional financial and grant management capacity across the world. Additionally, the GFGP is an exceptional resource for institutional capacity development, as it can be used to establish a baseline from which clear aspirations can be developed. However, the process of attaining this international certification is often faced with challenges, particularly for institutions whose management systems are still evolving. Through the "Building it Forward for Research (Management) Leadership in Southern Africa" Gates-funded Project, which aims to strengthen institutional financial governance and compliance frameworks in select Southern African universities, the Malawi University of Business and Applied (MUBAS) is in the process of attaining GFGP accreditation.

This paper provides an analysis of the internal and external challenges emerging universities such as MUBAS encounter, particularly focusing on gaps in financial policies, resource limitations, data management and capacity-building needs as well as the role of strategic leadership in overcoming these obstacles. In addition, the discussion focuses on strategies adopted by MUBAS, including leveraging on collaborative networks and partnerships, promotion of cross-functional collaboration, and fostering a culture of compliance.

By sharing insights from MUBAS's experience, this session will contribute valuable insights to the discourse on institutional capacity-building for grant management. It will be particularly beneficial to finance professionals, university administrators, grant managers, and policymakers seeking to understand and overcome hurdles in achieving financial accreditation, especially for young universities.

Ultimately, the session will provide practical guidance on minimizing disruptions, ensuring compliance, and strategically positioning upcoming institutions for long-term funding success.



## — Strategies for IP protection and navigating the regulatory landscape in Africa

**Dr Joanne Van Harmelen<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Mercia Fynn<sup>1</sup>, Mr Thapelo Mmotong<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Adams & Adams, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dr Joanne van Harmelen is a qualified attorney with over 15 years of experience in the legal profession. She specialises in patent filing and prosecution in the biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and chemicals sectors as well as advising clients on related regulatory and IP commercial matters.

Joanne's approach to advising clients is to consider holistically the commercial, regulatory and intellectual property aspects of the clients' business. Her clients include leading international biotechnology companies and start-ups. Joanne is consistently highly rated in rankings including Chambers & Partners, IAM Global Leaders, IAM Patent 1000, MIP IP Stars, The Legal 500 and Best Lawyers®.

Protection of intellectual property is key for the successful commercialisation of new products and processes, and in a resource-constrained environment such as the academic space, can be a valuable third-stream income. There are many opportunities on the African continent, but understanding how best to leverage the various IP systems across the continent can be a daunting task. Furthermore, particularly in the high tech and biotech fields, there is a complex interplay between IP rights and the regulatory requirements in this sector. This presentation will draw on the cross-cutting legal expertise of Adams & Adams to consider the various aspects required to be navigated for successful commercialisation of IP taking these considerations into account.

## — The AI patent gold rush – What works, what doesn't, and lessons from the field

**Mr Herman Van Schalkwyk**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Spoor & Fisher, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Herman van Schalkwyk is a Patent Attorney and holds a BEng (Mech), LLB and MBA degrees. He covers domestic and international patent and design matters, with a particular focus on the preparation and prosecution of patent and design applications within the general engineering fields. Herman has a keen interest in technology and works at the crossroads of law and technology.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionising not only software and data-driven fields but also traditional technology domains such as mechanical engineering, life sciences, and chemistry. As AI-driven innovations emerge across disciplines - ranging from AI-assisted drug discovery and intelligent materials design to predictive maintenance in engineering - securing strong patent protection becomes increasingly complex.

This presentation will explore the challenges and opportunities in patenting AI-related inventions. We will examine successful patent filings that integrate AI with physical sciences and engineering, highlighting strategies for demonstrating technical contributions beyond abstract ideas. Conversely, we will analyse common rejection pitfalls, including lack of sufficient technical disclosure and difficulties in distinguishing AI-assisted processes from conventional methods.

Through real-world case studies, attendees will gain insights into drafting AI patent applications that bridge different technology domains, navigating evolving legal standards, and leveraging hybrid IP strategies. By the end of the session, participants will be equipped with practical tools to enhance the patentability and commercialization of interdisciplinary AI-driven innovations.

## — Creating value from research and intellectual property in a State-Owned Company

**Dr Kammy Young**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd, Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

MSc Polymer Science at University of Potchefstroom, MSc in Innovation Management, PhD in Technology and Innovation Management, including Intellectual Property Management, at Da Vinci Institute, South Africa. Professional Natural Scientist – Polymer Scientist.

Been at Research Testing and Development (RT&D) for 26 years. Kammy was part of the team that pioneered research and development in polymeric bag filters to decrease particulate emissions from coal-fired power stations.

Currently managing Eskom's Intellectual Property Management Office at (RT&D) Department.

Intellectual property creation, through the execution of research and operational projects in a state-owned company is vastly different from that in a private company. The research at SOC's is aimed to improve the business processes and/or the improvement of plant, which is considered to be the primary deliverable. Exploitation of value from research, externally, i.e. commercialisation is bound by various internal compliances and external regulation. It becomes important to streamline and align research roadmaps to business requirements, while being mindful of the local and global impact of the implementation of research and innovation. The execution of research also results in a repository of valuable data sets that can be further ventilated for research and academic study, in order to add value to skills development and contribute to improved competitiveness of local industry.

The presentation will cover research funding, research management strategy and process, case studies of successfully implemented projects, research challenges, intellectual property creation and management, with the objective of indicating how to navigate the stringent non-agile processes in order to create value for the business, within the boundaries of governance, while adopting best practices and lessons learnt.

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# POSTER Abstracts:

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## — Enhancing postgraduate funding operations at Rhodes University

**Mrs Nichole Austin**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Nichole Austin is the Postgraduate Funding Manager in the Research Office, with over a decade of experience supporting postgraduate education and research development. She is responsible for managing funding schemes, implementing quality assurance processes, and coordinating financial administration to ensure that postgraduate students have fair and efficient access to funding opportunities.

Currently in the final year of her Master's in Education, Nichole brings a strong academic grounding to her professional role. Her work is informed by a commitment to educational equity, student success, and operational excellence.

Session Topic: Research Management

The effective management of postgraduate (PG) funding environments requires robust collaboration, streamlined processes, and strategic planning. Since 1998, the PG Funding division at Rhodes University has expanded significantly, now supporting approximately 1,800 postgraduate students annually, alongside regular engagement with 700 final-year undergraduates. This growth has been accompanied by a substantial increase in funding, rising from R36 million in 2014 to R78 million in 2025.

To support this expansion, several best practices have been implemented. Clear communication is facilitated through centralized platforms such as MS Teams and Seminars, regular interdepartmental meetings, and standardized operating procedures (SOPs). Integrated digital systems, including research management platforms and synchronized databases, enhance workflow efficiency and transparency. Cross-functional teams—comprising advisory and task groups—promote shared ownership and coordinated responses to funding opportunities.

Capacity building is prioritized through training workshops, mentoring programs, and knowledge repositories, which strengthen institutional memory and staff development. External engagement with inter-university working groups, benchmarking initiatives, and national forums ensures alignment with sector-wide trends and fosters innovation. Transparent decision-making frameworks, including defined eligibility criteria and structured appeals processes, build trust and accountability among stakeholders. Furthermore, data-driven planning—enabled by dashboards, feedback loops, and scenario modeling—supports responsive and strategic management of funding programs.

Collectively, these practices have enhanced the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of postgraduate funding operations, contributing to increased student retention, recruitment, and institutional resilience.

## — Improving researchers success with Section 20 Permits

**Mrs Suraya Azam**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Suraya Azam holds a BCom and a BCom Honours degree from the University of South Africa (UNISA), earned in 2019 and 2021, respectively. She is a Senior Administrative Officer for Biosafety and Animal Ethics in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Her role focuses on ensuring compliance with ethical and biosafety regulations in research. She is particularly interested in research integrity and leadership, contributing to the advancement of responsible research practices.

In South Africa, researchers using animals, animal-derived biological components, or animal pathogens for research or teaching are required to obtain a Section 20 permit under the Animal Diseases Act of 1984 (Act 35 of 84). This permit ensures compliance with ethical and regulatory standards focused on protecting animal welfare. While the application process can be cumbersome, it is essential to conduct research responsibly.

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) is responsible for reviewing applications and issuing Section 20 permits. However, unexpected challenges are encountered by researchers. These include delayed responses, uncertainty in meeting DoA's changing requirements, limited scheduling of laboratory inspections, and the need for constant follow-ups. In addition, limited communication from the DoA makes it difficult to navigate the application process which causes delays and disrupting research timelines and teaching activities.

To improve the success rate of obtaining Section 20 permits, certain strategies can be implemented. Providing researchers with a guideline document is crucial as DoA's requirements vary depending on the research study. Streamlining the application process and improving communication by tracking applications from submission to approval could help reduce delays. At the University of Cape Town (UCT), the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) helps to mitigate these challenges. The Senior Administrative Officer: Compliance oversees the process, supported by a Biosafety Consultant who reviews the scientific aspects of applications and provides feedback to researchers. In addition, offering training sessions can assist researchers to complete applications accurately and efficiently.

These improvements can result in quicker response time from DoA that will enable researchers to begin their studies timeously. Establishing a designated university department to manage the Section 20 process will improve communication with DoA. These approaches promote adaptability, vigilance and being proactive in problem-solving. Should challenges arise they will be addressed promptly, whilst maintaining a strong focus on ethical research practices.

## — Empowering research: The role of Professional Research Committee (PRC) for professional and support staff

**Ms Amisha Benode**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

I have over eight years of experience in research management with a solid foundation in strategic planning, project management, and research capacity building. I have worked in procedure development, providing research funding to professional and support staff, and research support for a long time. I have effectively spearheaded projects meant to boost the creativity and productivity of research for support staff. My responsibilities include managing research grant funding for conference attendance, reviewing project ethics applications, creating and implementing research training programs, and encouraging cooperation between researchers and institutional stakeholders. I played a key role in providing research support.

The Professional Research Committee (PRC) have the potential to bolster research support by leveraging the hidden potential of the Professional and Support Staff in a non-academic research setting. PRC can serve as a vital catalyst in supporting and enhancing the research contributions of the professional and permanent support staff at a Higher Education Institute. Historically overlooked, these staff members play a crucial role in institutional research but often lack access to the same research support structures as academics. PRCs address this gap by offering targeted funding, training, and professional development opportunities to empower PRG members by unlocking their potential and fostering a more inclusive research environment.

This presentation will examine the PRC's key role, including approving research grants for conference attendance and facilitating research ethics applications. Furthermore, PRC offers tailored support through programmes like the Master's and Doctoral Support Programme (MDSP), the Women in Research Support Programme (WiRSP), and the Comprehensive Open Distance e-Learning Research Support Programme (CODEL-RSP). By boosting research outputs and encouraging collaborative engagement between support staff and academics, these programmes help improve both individual career growth and contribution to institutional research success.

The methodology for this study involves a qualitative analysis of the PRC's impact on PRG members through case studies, interviews, and institutional data. The results will demonstrate how PRC programs support the institution's research goal by encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and increasing research output. Aligned with the conference theme, Expect the Unexpected: Unlocking the Value of Research and Innovation Management, this presentation will demonstrate how strategic investment in professional and support staff can result in unexpected but valuable research contributions. Participants will learn how their institutions might adopt comparable research support systems to promote research excellence and innovation management.

## — Navigating disruption: Building agile research management environments in a University of Technology

**Mr Prajesh Bhikha<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Chantelle Sonnekus<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Vaal University of Technology, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Prajesh Bhikha is an experienced professional with expertise in higher education, research management, and strategic development. With a background in facilitating innovation in academic environments, Prajesh has contributed to enhancing research capacity and building collaborative partnerships between academia, industry, and government. He is passionate about developing agile systems within universities, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and leveraging digital tools for effective decision-making. His work focuses on optimizing research strategies and ensuring that institutions of higher learning remain adaptable in an ever-evolving global landscape. Prajesh is committed to supporting the growth and sustainability of research initiatives.

The rapid pace of technological advancements, evolving educational landscapes, and shifting global challenges have created a need for universities to adapt quickly in order to maintain their competitiveness and relevance. In this context, Universities of Technology (UoTs) face unique challenges in managing research initiatives amidst constant disruption. Navigating these challenges requires the development of agile research management environments that can respond swiftly to emerging trends, foster innovation, and ensure sustainability.

This presentation explores the critical factors that enable UoTs to build and maintain agile research management systems that are resilient in the face of disruption. It examines how key elements such as leadership, organizational culture, resource allocation, and strategic planning influence the agility of research environments within UoTs. A particular focus is placed on the integration of digital tools and data-driven decision-making in research management, which enhance responsiveness to both academic and industry needs.

The presentation further discusses the importance of fostering collaborative partnerships across academia, industry, and government, emphasizing the role of external networks in driving innovation and supporting agile research. Additionally, it investigates the role of leadership in creating a culture of flexibility and continuous improvement, ensuring that the research strategies implemented are aligned with evolving technological and societal demands.

The presentation will provide actionable insights for higher education leaders and administrators to navigate disruption and build robust, agile research management environments. In conclusion, the ability to adapt to change and foster innovation will not only enhance the effectiveness of research management but also improve the overall impact of research outputs, positioning UoTs at the forefront of global knowledge creation in an increasingly dynamic world.

## — Assessing innovation and translational research capacity to advance health R&D commercialisation at higher education institutions

**Dr Ezekiel Onoshe Boro**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Becky Jones-Phillips<sup>1</sup>, Dr Chris Peters<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Liverpool, United Kingdom

### **Biography:**

Head of the Innovation Capacity Strengthening Programme at LSTM, with a medical degree and MSc in Global Health. My expertise spans innovation capacity strengthening, entrepreneurship, business development, strategy development and management, programme management, and healthcare service delivery. I have 10 years of experience and have worked with global organizations like FIND, MSF, Market Access Africa advancing access to health technologies in LMICs.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a critical role in health research and innovation, yet many HEIs — particularly in Africa — face significant challenges in translating early-stage research into commercially viable public health products. This gap, often referred to as the "valley of death", is exacerbated by fragmented innovation ecosystems, limited commercialisation knowledge and skills, and unclear pathways for translating research into impact. The FLIGHT (Framework for Leveraging Innovation in Global Health Technologies) project aims to address these challenges by enhancing the capacity of HEIs to convert health R&D assets into deployable health interventions that drive societal and economic impact.

The project also seeks to develop an Innovation and Enterprise Framework to strengthen institutional approaches to R&D commercialisation and translational research.

As a foundational step, we conducted a baseline capacity assessment across partner institutions using a mixed-methods approach. This assessment combined literature reviews, surveys, qualitative interviews, and focus group discussions with HEI academic and non-academic staff, and Early Career Researchers to evaluate existing public health R&D assets, commercialisation knowledge, skills, and attitudes, institutional support systems, and key barriers and opportunities for strengthening innovation pathways.

This session will share the FLIGHT team's baseline assessment methodology, early insights into institutional capacities and lessons learned in identifying gaps and opportunities to improve innovation and translational research capacity. The presentation will also highlight how these insights are informing the development of FLIGHT's Innovation and Enterprise Framework.

We believe our assessment approach and findings offer valuable learning's for HEIs in Africa and globally, especially for institutions with a societal impact-driven research mission seeking to translate (public) health research into impactful, market-ready interventions. The presentation will offer reflections on how tailored capacity strengthening initiatives can enhance the commercialisation potential of health R&D pipelines in resource-constrained settings.



## — Strengthening research networks for research and innovation uptake: Collaboration for water security in Namibian Municipalities

**Dr Vuyisile Dlamini**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia

### **Biography:**

Vuyisile is a postdoctoral researcher working on water security and climate change projects. She coordinates project work plans and monitors PhD research projects across five Southern African countries. Vuyisile is also responsible for preparing research publications. Vuyisile has led collaborative applied research projects in water resources management and facilitated stakeholder engagements, built networks and coordinated partnerships for future collaboration. With experience in project management Vuyisile fosters collaboration and innovation in the water sector.

Achieving meaningful research impact requires strong, collaborative networks that bridge the gap between research and practical implementation. In municipalities where research uptake often faces institutional barriers, research managers' efforts towards network building play a crucial role in fostering partnerships that drive research and innovation uptake. Drawing on a case study on the application of AI and IoT to enhance water security in selected municipalities in Namibia, the paper highlights how collaboration can be leveraged to build and sustain effective research networks that enhance the integration of research into municipal decision-making and service delivery. The paper highlights practices that promote a socio-relational climate conducive to innovation uptake. Findings from the case study show that participatory knowledge co-creation, capacity building, and institutional support promote inclusive and innovative uptake. These collaborative approaches lead to solutions that address specific needs of municipalities, foster ownership, and ensure that the societal impacts are sustainable and can be integrated into policy and practice.

## — University leadership in research and innovation: A strategic framework for African competitiveness

**Prof Wahab Egbewole**<sup>1</sup>, Prof Abdulkarim Oloyede<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

### **Biography:**

Professor Wahab Egbewole, SAN, is the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin and a distinguished legal scholar. A Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), he has extensive experience in legal education, university administration, and research governance. His leadership focuses on academic excellence, ethical governance, and enhancing research impact. He champions interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation, and global partnerships to strengthen the university's rankings and societal relevance. Beyond academia, he is active in legal reform and arbitration, contributing to policy development in higher education. His vision promotes sustainable research ecosystems that align institutional goals with national and global development priorities.

The evolving landscape of global higher education demands that universities transcend traditional research functions and actively engage in innovation and entrepreneurship. For African institutions, particularly in the face of global university rankings and increasing pressure for societal impact, a well-structured Research and Development (R&D) ecosystem is essential. This paper explores the role of university leadership—particularly vice-chancellors and administrators—in fostering a research environment that drives innovation, commercialization, and economic growth.

This study presents a strategic framework that integrates governance, policy, and institutional culture to enhance the research-to-innovation pipeline. It examines how universities can leverage intellectual property (IP) policies, technology transfer offices, and industry partnerships to transform research outputs into commercially viable solutions. Additionally, the paper highlights the critical role of university governance in securing research funding, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and ensuring research aligns with both local and global developmental priorities, such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Key challenges, including regulatory hurdles, funding limitations, and ethical concerns in research commercialization, are analyzed, with recommendations for policy interventions and administrative reforms. The paper also discusses how African universities can develop performance metrics that accurately reflect their innovation impact, ensuring that ranking methodologies account for entrepreneurship and technology transfer alongside traditional academic outputs.

By proposing an actionable roadmap, this paper provides insights into how university leadership can position African institutions as global players in research and innovation. Strengthening governance structures, enhancing institutional support for research commercialization, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship will not only boost university rankings but also contribute to sustainable economic and societal development.

## — Capacitating RMAs for the unknown: A mentorship perspective

**Mr Sidney Engelbrecht<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Tanya Coetzee<sup>2</sup>, Dr Retha Visagie<sup>3</sup>, Mrs Eleni Flack-Davison<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>King Abdullah University Of Science And Technology, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, <sup>2</sup>University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Braamfontein, South Africa, <sup>3</sup>University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Sidney is a Senior Research Compliance Specialist at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia with 15 years of experience in research ethics and integrity. He is an accredited Research Management Professional by the International Professional Recognition Council. He is the recipient of the SARIMA/DSI Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Research Management Profession and co-recipient of the Anderson-Kleinert Diversity Award. Sidney is a Research Group Fellow (with distinction) from the Center for AI & Digital Policy (US) and a Fellow of the EdSafe AI Alliance Fellowship Programme. He is currently pursuing a PhD in AI Ethics.

Mentoring research managers and administrators (RMAs) fosters resilience, adaptability, and strategic thinking in a complex research environment. RMAs must navigate dynamic funding landscapes, including recent policy shifts such as the funding cuts announced by the US President, shifting institutional priorities, ever-changing compliance frameworks, and unexpected crises. These often unexpected challenges may include global disruptions like pandemics (as seen with COVID-19), financial shortfalls, leadership transitions and political instabilities. Given the challenges inherent to a research environment in flux, RMAs would greatly benefit from a structured homegrown mentorship programme.

The presentation explores the dimensions of an inclusive multinational, multicultural mentorship programme that aims to prepare RMAs to anticipate and effectively manage uncertainties within the research ecosystem. This homegrown mentorship programme with mentors and mentees across Africa incorporates key approaches such as scenario-based training, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and nurturing a problem-solving mindset and skillset. Throughout the mentorship programme, mentors play a pivotal role in promoting adaptability by using case studies, peer networking, career conversations and exposure to real-world challenges within the research management environment. Additionally, emotional intelligence, stress management techniques, and mental health awareness further support RMAs in handling high-pressure working environments. By developing these competencies, RMAs can enhance institutional research administration productivity, ensure compliance with policies, funder requirements, and regulatory frameworks, and contribute to institutional success by maximising the value and impact of research-producing institutions. RMAs will gain valuable insights and practical strategies drawn from the lessons learned through the evaluation of the mentorship programme, particularly in fostering adaptability and resilience. In conclusion, the well-structured mentorship programme has equipped RMAs to expect the unexpected and thrive in a dynamic research ecosystem. Mentorship emerged as crucial in reinforcing ethical decision-making, collaboration, and innovation within research management and administration, which are necessary for RMAs to thrive.

## — Navigating disruption: Building agile research management environments

**Mr Bakary Fatty**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Medical Research Council at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Banjul, Gambia

### **Biography:**

Bakary is a dedicated and results-driven Project Officer with a strong track record of managing and coordinating projects efficiently. With expertise in planning, execution, and stakeholder engagement, Bakary plays a key role in ensuring projects are delivered on time, within scope, and aligned with organizational goals.

Bakary is Passionate about Project management, community development, technology, business operations. Bakary is skilled in project management methodologies, budgeting, risk assessment, and performance tracking.

In today's fast-paced research landscape, agility is key to maintaining efficiency, collaboration, and innovation. Traditional research management frameworks often struggle to keep up with evolving priorities, interdisciplinary collaboration, and rapid technological advancements. This presentation explores how agile methodologies can be adapted to research environments, fostering flexibility, responsiveness, and continuous improvement. In Medical Research Council at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (MRCG at LSHTM) we often used Traditional research management structures often struggle to adapt, leading to inefficiencies and stalled progress. This presentation explores how agile principles can transform research management, enabling teams to remain responsive, innovative, and resilient in the face of disruption. Effective research management requires strong organizational, communication, and leadership skills, as well as a deep understanding of the research process and the specific requirements of the research project. It plays a critical role in ensuring that research projects are completed successfully and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge in their respective fields. MRCG@LSHTM mission is to improve health in Africa and across the globe. In Medical Research Council at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (MRCG at LSHTM), we were able to improve health and health research in Africa and across the World, I believe it is right time to shift our strategies for implementing agile methodologies in research settings, including iterative planning, adaptive resource allocation, and collaborative decision-making. By applying agile principles—such as iterative planning, continuous feedback, and flexible resource allocation—research leaders can build environments that foster collaboration, responsiveness, and sustained impact. We will examine real-world case studies where agile strategies have successfully addressed challenges in research workflows, funding cycles, and institutional governance.

**Keywords:** Agile Research Management, Disruption and Adaptation.

## — Managing MSCA doctoral network grants: A case study in unexpected challenges, agility and perseverance

**Ms Maléne Fouché<sup>1</sup>**, Ms Lizél Senekal<sup>1</sup>, Prof Florian Bauer<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Maléne Fouché currently holds the position of Director: Research Grants Office at the Division for Research Development of Stellenbosch University. Her office reviews and authorises research grant proposals submitted to an extensive range of funding bodies and assures pre- and post-award compliance on these grants. Maléne's academic background is in Biochemistry, Genetics, Informatics and Applied Ethics. After obtaining her MSc Agric degree in Molecular Genetics in 1996, and before joining the SU Division for Research Development in 2003, she was a researcher at Infruitec, an institute of the South African Agricultural Research Council.

Limited investment in research by governments in Southern Africa is increasingly forcing our researchers to depend on funders from the global north. At the same time, many funders from the global north have recognised the importance of including experts from the global south in research teams to better study and address global problems, and they are increasingly opening funding calls where participation by one or more researchers from a low or middle-income country is either a requirement or strongly encouraged. The EU-Africa Innovation Agenda, formally adopted on 19 July 2023, is an example of this.

This should be a win-win scenario but how equipped are institutions from the global south to manage these grants and meet all funder requirements and how suited are these funding instruments to the needs and specific contexts of researchers in the global south?

Stellenbosch University has been very successful in securing funding from the European Commission through different instruments in the Horizon Europe programme. In this case study we shall use our experience with managing Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Networks grants to illustrate to fellow research managers the benefits and challenges of participation in a programme, designed for the global north, but also being widely promoted as a good option to support research in the global south.

## — Use of AI in research management

**Mr Gibril Gabbidon**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Medical Research Council - The Gambia, Banjul, Gambia

### **Biography:**

I am Gibril Gabbidon, a Project Officer with the Medical Research Council at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, The Gambia, since September 2022. I graduated with BSc degree in Economics from the University of The Gambia in 2019. I am currently pursuing my master's degree in business administration (MBA) with the same University and I expect to complete it in 2026. I was also conferred the global credential Project Management Professional (PMP) by the Project Management Institute (PMI) in March 2024.

The emergence of modern technologies has positively impacted every sphere of human existence. These technologies, most notably, AI, are reshaping traditional management practices. The research management profession is no exception to this new phenomenon. Using AI, the Research management profession is taking new dimensions that is increasing the efficiency and scope of delivery of research managers.

The use of AI in the day-to-day research management practices must, however, comply with acceptable professional and globally acceptable ethical standards to yield the intended positive outcomes. Some irresponsible use of AI in research management includes over-reliance on automation and using AI reports without human critical thinking and citing appropriate references and data privacy breaches. If the use of AI systems or tools do not conform to acceptable research management standards, this may lead to lack of grant compliance, lack of integrity and lack of professionalism outcomes.

Responsible use of AI is therefore crucial in maintaining and enhancing the credibility of the Research Management profession as well as ensuring efficient research management services in research institutions. Research institutions and the Research Management associations must develop codes of conduct for the use of AI by professionals like Research Managers. Research institutions and Research Management Associations should consider putting in place rigorous AI governance plans, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the evolving use of AI in Research management and training of Research Managers to use AI responsibly.

This presentation will bring to the fore, the current indispensability of using AI in research management as a means of complementing human efforts to improve on efficiency and the need for research institutions and Research management associations as professional bodies to develop codes of conduct for the use of AI in Research Management

## — Assessing the NRF rating process and institutional incentives at a South African University

**Mrs Heide Goedhals**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Mrs. Heide Goedhals is a Senior Research Support Officer in the Research & Postgraduate Support Office at North-West University, with over 10 years of experience in research administration. In her current role, she specializes in both pre- and post-award research funding administration, ensuring smooth financial management for researchers. Mrs. Goedhals also plays a key role in overseeing the NRF Evaluation and Rating process, helping to navigate complex systems and regulations to support research excellence at the university.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) rating system is a key component of South Africa's research ecosystem, shaping funding allocation, institutional prestige, and researcher trajectories. This study examines how a South African university navigates the NRF rating process, with a particular focus on the institutional mechanisms designed to support and incentivise rated researchers.

Drawing on institutional records and qualitative insights from researchers and administrators, the study identifies key challenges and best practices in managing the rating process within an evolving research landscape. Findings reveal procedural complexities, uneven levels of institutional support, and the strategic role of research information management. While the NRF rating system encourages high-quality research, barriers such as the complexity of the application process, limited awareness, and the pressure to publish may deter participation, particularly among emerging researchers.

The study further explores institutional strategies aimed at fostering research excellence, including mentorship initiatives and structured support frameworks. By optimising incentives—such as financial awards, workload adjustments, and targeted research grants—universities can create more effective and adaptive support structures. Aligning research management practices with institutional strategy is essential for fostering a sustainable and inclusive research culture. This study contributes to the broader discourse on research evaluation in higher education, offering insights into enhancing the NRF rating process for long-term research capacity development.

## — Accelerating innovation: Strategies for effective technology transfer in developing countries – The African experience

**Mrs Solinda Gomez Kwokori<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Medical Research Council at LSHTM, Banjul, Gambia

### **Biography:**

My name is Solinda Gomez Kwokori. I was born on March 21st 1996, in Serekunda, The Gambia. I started my early childhood development at the Javouhey Nursery School in 1999, then proceeded to St. Therese's Lower and Upper Basic School in the early 2000. In 2011, I commenced high school at the SOS Hermann Gmeiner Technical Senior Secondary School. In 2018, I graduated from the University of The Gambia with a Bachelor's degree. Upon completion, I joined the Medical Research Council in February 2019. I am married and currently pursuing my Master's degree in Public administration.

Innovation plays a crucial role in driving economic development, yet many African nations struggle to translate research into real-world applications. Technology transfer, which involves moving knowledge and innovations from research institutions to industries and society, is essential for fostering economic progress and addressing pressing challenges. However, several obstacles, including weak collaborations between academia and industry, limited funding, regulatory hurdles, and intellectual property (IP) constraints, hinder this process.

This study examines key strategies to enhance technology transfer and accelerate innovation in Africa, drawing insights from successful case studies. Effective approaches include strengthening partnerships between universities and industries to facilitate commercialization, establishing technology transfer offices (TTOs) within research institutions to oversee patents and licensing, and leveraging public-private partnerships to fund and support innovation. Additionally, the study explores the role of policy frameworks in creating a conducive environment for technology transfer, particularly in areas such as IP protection, research funding, and startup incubation.

The paper also highlights the impact of digital transformation, innovation hubs, and knowledge-sharing networks in bridging the gap between research and industry. By identifying best practices and policy recommendations, this study aims to contribute to Africa's growing innovation ecosystem, ensuring that research-based solutions can be effectively transformed into impactful technologies. Strengthening technology transfer mechanisms will not only drive sustainable development but also enhance Africa's position in the global knowledge economy.



## — Transforming collaborations for sustainable impact – A case study of Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS)

**Mrs Esther Gondwe<sup>1</sup>, Mr Andrew Kachere<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi, <sup>2</sup>Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

Esther Gondwe holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences from the University of Malawi, an ACCA Certified Diploma in Accounting and Finance and a Master's Degree in Business Administration. She has over 15 years' experience in project management and in research and grants management having held senior positions within Malawi. She has managed research grants from the NIH, BMGF, EDCTP, the Wellcome Trust, Medical Research Council among others. She has also participated in training and policy development for grants management and research administration at the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences. She also has two awards from the SRA International.

In a modern scientific research landscape, the aspect of research collaboration is an evolving aspect demanding an innovative approach in networking and partnership cultivation. Therefore, to achieve meaningful research outcomes and social impact it demands concerted efforts and robust collaboration. This abstract therefore, seeks to unearth the shapeshifting face of collaboration in research realm with emphasis on the role of digital open access and data repository frameworks and strategic affiliation to enhance knowledge sharing and sustainable resource mobilization.

For sub-Saharan institutions such as Kamuzu University of Health Sciences there is need for a strong capacity for collaboration. Currently, the key strategies implemented by KUHeS to strengthen collaboration include fostering interdisciplinary partnerships, enhancing communication channels, and implementing inclusive governance structures that empower all stakeholders

KUHeS strives to position itself as the hub of inclusivity, equity and impact driven research partnerships leveraging local talent whilst consorting with global entities. The institution's strategy to employs a holistic and advanced framework that bridges intra-and extramural stakeholders including researchers, staff and affiliates. The priority is given to good governance practices that covers a wide range of collaborative platforms to provide cutting edge and advanced solutions to complex health and social challenges beyond knowledge sharing.

To add to that, KUHeS's collaborative model also seeks to amplify its national and global impact. This centers on addressing health-related challenges in resource-limited settings such as low and middle income countries (LMICs). This means remodeling traditional research management approach into integrated and adaptive networks to cater for complex global issues.

Finally, our KUHeS's primary focus centers on strengthening institutional research capabilities, optimizing funding opportunities, and promoting evidence-based policy formulation. By prioritizing inclusivity and equitable collaboration, institutions can decode new opportunities for innovation and social impact.

## — Navigating the researcher lifecycle: Institutional support at University of Cape Town Faculty of Health Sciences

**Ms Carlette Hlungwani<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Haneem Matjiet<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Ms. Carlette Hlungwani, a Research Intelligence Manager at the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS). She contributes to the strategic management and development of research initiatives within the faculty. She has co-authored publications focusing on research output models in South African universities. In 2021, Carlette was part of the FHS Research Office team that received the Vice-Chancellor's Service Excellence Award, highlighting her dedication to enhancing research administration and support. Her academic credentials include but not limited to MSC in Health Promotion, Research Coordinator at Wits University, lecturer at Regenesys School of Public Management and currently at UCT.

The journey of a researcher is marked by career stages, each presenting unique challenges and opportunities. This paper explores how the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Office (FRO) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) provides tailored support to researchers at different stages of their academic careers.

We first examine early-career development, highlighting funding schemes and support systems available to postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows. This phase is characterized by skill acquisition, networking, and collaborative projects that establish a strong foundation for future research careers.

Next, we explore the postdoctoral and clinical research fellowship phase, where researchers assume leadership roles, mentor junior colleagues, and contribute to strategic projects. We analyse how UCT FHS fosters innovation through programs and funding mechanisms that translate research into clinical practice and policy.

The transition to independent research presents challenges in securing funding, publishing, and navigating administrative processes. We emphasize the importance of internal funding in enabling interdisciplinary collaborations and global engagement.

For mid-career researchers, we highlight UCT FHS initiatives that provide targeted funding, mentorship, and training opportunities. Programs such as the Start-Up Grant support researchers in developing grant-writing skills, enhancing their ability to secure external funding.

Our findings aim to inform institutional policies that strengthen research capacity across all career stages, fostering an environment of excellence and innovation in FHS research at UCT.

The evaluation of RMA strategies should be multidimensional, considering both quantitative and qualitative metrics. This abstract will only focus on methods for tracking the lifecycle of a researcher to potential increased publications and grant success rates.

In summary, this discussion will provide insight into how RMAs can quantify and qualify the impact of their strategies, ultimately driving research success and contributing to the overall goals of academic institutions.

**Keywords:** Researcher life cycle, Health Sciences, UCT/FHS, mentorship, academic development, Research Management

## — Grant management policy and research development plan at Zambeze University: Challenges and prospects for implementing

**Dr Noé Hofiço, MSc Júlio Mabuie**

<sup>1</sup>Zambeze University, Beira, Mozambique

### **Biography:**

I am a Mozambican lecturer and researcher at Zambeze University (UniZambeze) in Mozambique. I hold a BSc Honours degree in Forestry Engineering from Eduardo Mondlane University, as well as an MSc and PhD in Forest Management from the Federal University of Santa Maria (Brazil). My research focuses on growth and yield modeling for sustainable forest management, with a particular emphasis on the biodiversity conservation of tropical dry forests. Currently, I serve as Director of the Scientific Directorate at Zambeze University, the central body responsible for coordinating, implementing, and overseeing institutional policies related to scientific research, extension, and postgraduate studies.

The UniZambeze must demonstrate the ability to manage external funding both efficiently and effectively. However, the process of awarding research grants remains a challenge due to procedural inefficiencies. The Grants Management Policy aims to optimize funding opportunities primarily through competitive grant proposals submitted to various donors. Regardless of the funding source, this policy is designed to ensure that all funds are spent in full compliance with the specific requirements of each donor in accordance with the award notice for successful grants, and within the designated timeframes. To ensure robust grant implementation, UniZambeze's Grants Management team comprises four key functional units: Finance Team: Responsible for finalizing and managing project budgets. This team ensures that funds are appropriately utilized, preventing both under and overspending, as well as any misuse of resources. Grants Compliance Team: Ensures adherence to all sponsor requirements, including conditions outlined in the award notice and internal grant management policies. Human Resources Team: Manages recruitment, selection, and oversight of project personnel, ensuring qualified staff are in place to support project execution. Administrative team: Oversees all administrative tasks related to grant and project implementation, including documentation, reporting, and coordination. The Grants Management Team is actively involved from the grant application stage and, once an award is received, ensures that systems and procedures are in place to support the project in meeting its contractual obligations to the funder. Poor grants management can lead to serious consequences, including forensic audits, suspension or withholding of funds, or even disqualification from future funding opportunities. This could significantly hinder UniZambeze's ability to conduct research and achieve its strategic goals. To address existing gaps in financial and grants management capacity, additional resources and support must be allocated as needed. Strengthening these systems is essential to ensure compliance, transparency, and sustainability in the University's research.

## — Integrating interactive biometric big data models into research and innovation at South African Universities

**Mr Thamsanqa Hombana**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Witwatersrand, Braamfontein, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Thamsanqa is an open contributor based in South Africa with an interest in research in generative artificial intelligence, systems engineering, data science, open data and open science. His work focuses on promoting ethical research practices and the use of generative machine intelligence tools and techniques in scientific research. As a member of the Research Data Alliance (RDA), Thamsanqa contributes to the development of best practices in scientific research and innovation, and supports collaborative research initiatives aimed at re-use, accessibility and interoperability of open research and innovation data.

The integration of large-scale language models and interactive biometric models of big data in research and innovation promotes the security, transparency and reproducibility of scientific data by means of automated methods. Automated tools find patterns in large data sets to form theories, while functional data analysis (FDA) uses biometric data to meet the demands of theoretical frameworks. To highlight the usefulness of LLMs in improving scientific research practice, ProActive or Professional Abstractor (ProAb) and BigScience Open Access Multilingual Language Model (BLOM) are discussed. ProAb uses linked open data repositories to interpret scientific research and BLOM helps improve the availability, usability and translation of multilingual data to facilitate research collaboration across the world. The findings highlight the importance of data quality and validation in addressing ethical and governance issues in the integration of biometric big data in scientific research and innovation. This integration supports open science-driven innovation projects such as the Framework Programme for Fisheries (FORGE), which will enhance the efficient and ethical use of biometrics in scientific research. This paper also covers the role of artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technologies in driving the transfer of research-based technologies to universities in South Africa with a view to increasing productivity and creativity through predictive analytics in innovation. The risks of technology over-reliance, ethical issues and data privacy that are common to innovation and technology transfer are explained. The findings call for more research into innovative applications and approaches to integrate artificial intelligence into research and technology transfer processes in universities and recommend that risks and ethical issues be addressed to bring innovation and technology transfer to bear on real human problems. This research will demonstrate the benefits of using large-scale language models and interactive big-data interactive models in research to support innovation and technology transfer initiatives in South African universities.

## — Use of AI generative text tools in proposal development: Developments, initiatives and future directions

**Dr Rob Huddy**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UCT, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dr Rob Huddy is a Proposal Development Specialist within the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Office at UCT. Rob has a PhD in Molecular and Cell Biology (UCT) and a research background as an Applied and Environmental Microbiologist. In his current role Rob provides pre-award support to Faculty of Health Sciences researchers identifying and applying for local and international research grants. He strives to help the faculty's researchers achieve sustainable research funding through developing and delivering workshops for grant writing and proposal development as well as providing dedicated proposal development support to senior researchers targeting major international grants.

There can be little doubt that researchers across the world are leveraging artificial-intelligence (AI) tools, including text-generation models, within their research activities. Grant proposals, based on the standard requirements for bulk text inputs, are uniquely positioned as a research activity readily able to be supported by AI tools as well as representing a significant risk to the scientific community related to research misconduct, including plagiarism and fabricated citations. A 2023 Nature survey of 1,600 researchers found that more than 15% of respondents have used AI technology to help them write grant proposals.

The Research Funders Policy Group, comprising science and health research funders in the UK, published a joint statement in 2023 in which they set out expectations around the use of generative AI tools in funding applications. The joint statement highlights several benefits arising from the use of AI tools, but also highlights the potential risks, including ethical, legal and integrity, within the proposal development workflow. The responsibility is placed firmly on researchers to ensure that AI tools are used responsibly and in accordance with the policies of institutions and agencies/organisations, where they exist.

The Research Development Team, within the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Faculty of Health Sciences Research Office, in collaboration with colleagues in UCT's Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) are actively engaging with the UCT Faculty of Health Sciences research community to ensure that researchers are informed and aware of the potential risks of using AI tools as well as to educate and, thereby empower, researchers to use these tools in a responsible and effective manner for the development of competitive grant proposals. This presentation will share initial lessons in supporting staff in using generative AI for grant writing.

## — The changing face of collaboration: Navigating institutional networks for platinum accreditation

### **Ms Mandy Jampies<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

#### **Biography:**

Mandy Jampies is a Senior Officer with 19 years of experience in Higher Education Administration. Holding a B.Tech in Office Management and Technology, as well as a National Diploma in Commercial Administration, she brings a wealth of expertise to her role. With 10 years as a Postdoctoral Coordinator, Mandy has specialized in postdoctoral administration and managed DRD-funded postgraduate bursaries. Her dedication and proficiency in overseeing complex administrative tasks make her an invaluable asset in supporting academic endeavors within the institution.

The Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) Standard outlines over 300 requirements that major funders consider when allocating research funding. These requirements span four key practice areas: financial management, human resources, procurement and governance. Achieving compliance with these rigorous standards is critical for institutions seeking to enhance their research funding capabilities and credibility.

The University of the Free State's (UFS) successful application for platinum accreditation under the GFGP framework marked a significant milestone in its commitment to research excellence. However, this achievement was not without its challenges. The primary hurdle was the tight timeline, which necessitated swift and effective collaboration across multiple departments. Frequent engagement with colleagues highlighted the need to communicate the strategic importance of accreditation—not just for researchers but for the institution as a whole.

Despite these difficulties, the process proved invaluable in fostering stronger institutional networks. Collaboration with Finance provided deeper insight into research funding structures, while working with Human Resources ensured alignment with compliance and researcher contract requirements. Engaging with IT helped address digital infrastructure needs, and coordination with Procurement and Governance reinforced the importance of transparency and accountability. This cross-departmental teamwork was essential in demonstrating the university's commitment to international best practices.

Ultimately, this accreditation journey underscored that institutional success is built on collaboration. The ability to bridge gaps between departments, align objectives, and navigate complex compliance frameworks proved instrumental in securing the highest GFGP recognition. By strengthening its internal networks, UFS has set a precedent for future research initiatives, reaffirming that strategic collaboration is the foundation of sustainable research funding and institutional growth.

## — Opportunities for professional staff to engage in research

**Mr Katlego Kekae<sup>1</sup>, Mr Abe Mathopa<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Gerald Katlego Kekae serves as the National Coordinator for the University Staff Doctoral Programme (USDP) at the University of Pretoria (UP), which functions as the national implementing partner for DHET. In this pivotal role, He coordinates and implements transformative initiatives designed to increase the number and quality of PhD holders among university staff across South Africa.

With a strong background in research management and staff development, he has been instrumental in supporting the USDP through its various implementation phases since 2020. His work directly contributes to addressing critical skills gaps within South African higher education institutions.

Research management professionals have become essential components of successful universities and research institutions. While academic staff traditionally lead research activities, professional staff represent a valuable yet underutilized resource in South Africa's higher education landscape.

Professional staff face significant barriers to research participation, including restrictive institutional policies, overwhelming administrative responsibilities, and limited recognition for their research contributions. The most formidable obstacle remains inequitable access to research funding, as most grants target academic researchers while explicitly excluding professional staff. This funding gap severely limits their ability to conduct meaningful research and contribute to knowledge creation within the National System of Innovation (NSI).

Recognizing this challenge, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has developed a strategic funding instrument under the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP), one of them being the University Staff Doctoral Programme (USDP). The USDP is a key initiative that aims to increase both the quantity and quality of PhD-qualified staff in South African universities. Since its 2018 inception, the USDP has evolved through five implementation phases, with the University of Pretoria providing consistent implementation and programme support.

The main aim of the study is to address the misconception that USDP caters for academic staff only while it caters for professional staff members as well.

The USDP presents an invaluable opportunity for professional staff to overcome traditional research barriers. We strongly encourage professional staff to apply for this funding opportunity, which supports their doctoral studies while contributing their unique perspectives to research. Professional staff bring institutional knowledge and cross-disciplinary insights that significantly enrich research outputs, fostering a more inclusive research culture and enhancing institutional productivity by addressing the challenge of supervisory and mentorship capacity while contributing to the National Development Plan (NDP) target of PhD produced nationally.

## — Ethical challenges in AI-Driven research: Consent, data privacy, and algorithmic bias

**Mr Kaparela Khalo**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Thembinkosi Mabila<sup>2</sup>, Mr Nyiko Machavi<sup>3</sup>, Dr Tukiso Sewapa<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Limpopo, Polokwane, South Africa, <sup>2</sup>University of Limpopo, Polokwane, South Africa, <sup>3</sup>University of Limpopo, Polokwane, South Africa, <sup>4</sup>University of Limpopo, Polokwane, South Africa

### Biography:

Kaparela Khalo serves as a Research Ethics Assistant at the University of Limpopo, where he is responsible for conducting administrative reviews and reporting on research ethics application processes for the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) and the Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC). He assists researchers with their ethics applications and provides guidance on ethical regulations. He holds a Master's degree in English Studies from the University of Limpopo, South Africa. His primary interests include Research Ethics, English for Academic Purposes, and Science Communication.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in research has changed how data is collected, analysed, and used, making research faster and more efficient. However, it has also introduced serious ethical challenges that need careful consideration. This study explored key ethical issues in AI-driven research, focusing on informed consent, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the changing power balance between researchers, participants, and AI systems. It also examined the risks of AI-generated data and the potential for misuse by individuals and organisations.

A qualitative research approach was used, including interviews with AI researchers, case studies, and expert opinions. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) helped to identify key ethical concerns. The study found among others that (1) obtaining proper informed consent in AI research was difficult because data processing and automated decision-making were often unclear; (2) ensuring data privacy and security was challenging, especially when AI models used sensitive personal data; and (3) AI systems reinforced power imbalances, as biased algorithms often disadvantaged vulnerable groups.

These findings have important implications for research ethics committees, especially in reviewing AI-related studies. The study highlights the need for clear ethical guidelines to address emerging challenges in digital and AI research.



## — Ethical resilience: Adapting to emerging challenges encountered by Health Research Ethics office at Stellenbosch University

**Ms Charmaine Khumalo<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Siti Kabanda<sup>1</sup>, Mr Ashwin Manuel<sup>1</sup>, Ms Brightness Nxumalo<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Parow, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Charmaine Khumalo is the Head of the Health Research Ethics Office at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. With over five years of experience in research ethics and integrity, she is a recognized expert in the field, accredited as a Research Management Professional by the International Recognition Council. Additionally, she is a certified Research Integrity Trainer through the Embassy of Good Science. Charmaine earned her undergraduate degree in Microbiology and Genetics from UKZN and holds an MSc in Bioethics and Health Law from Wits University. She is pursuing a PhD in Health Research Ethics through the SARETI Leadership Programme at UKZN.

With the ever-evolving landscape of health research, Health Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) often face unexpected challenges that necessitate quick change and strategic decisions-making. This paper focuses on the experience of Stellenbosch University's Health Research Ethics Office (HREO) as it navigates various unexpected challenges. SU operates two distinct HRECs dedicated to health research, a structure that sets it apart from other RECs at institutions across South Africa (SA).

The challenges experienced by HREC encompass submission of high volume of research protocols, ethics knowledge from interdisciplinary departments, limited qualitative research expertise and issues related to remote monitoring. In recent years, there has been a notable surge in health research likely prompted by global public health crises (including mental health and climate change), recent pandemics and advancements of new technologies, all of which have created an urgent demand for research aimed at finding cures, treatments, or preventive measures for health issues worldwide. Considering this context, it may shed light on the substantial influx of research submissions that exceeded the usual review capacity. This situation led the HREO to convene a meeting to strategize how the protocols could be reviewed timely, without overwhelming the HREC members while ensuring appropriate ethical standards are being maintained. This ultimately led to the birth of an Ad Hoc meeting during that period.

Despite the advantages of having two HRECs within the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences as well as a subcommittee that focuses on undergraduate applications, the committees continue to encounter significant challenges. This paper describes how Stellenbosch University's HREO addressed these challenges by fostering a sense of solidarity among HREO. This was accomplished through collaboration, mutual support, and a shared commitment to developing a pragmatic and clear review process that upheld the integrity of ethical oversight while navigating the complexities of emerging research practices.

## — The dichotomy of research management: Administrative versus academic duties - Who are we?

**Ms Charmaine Khumalo<sup>1</sup>, Mr Siyanda Manqele<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Parow, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Charmaine Khumalo is the Head of the Health Research Ethics Office at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. With over six years of experience in research ethics and integrity, she is a recognized expert in the field, accredited as a Research Management Professional by the International Recognition Council. Additionally, she is a certified Research Integrity Trainer through the Embassy of Good Science. Charmaine earned her undergraduate degree in Microbiology and Genetics from the UKZN and holds an MSc in Bioethics and Health Law from Wits. She is pursuing a PhD in Health Research Ethics through SARETI Leadership Programme at UKZN.

While research administration emerged over 60 years ago, from western countries like the United States, and has developed in many other parts of the world although with varying terminology and nuances. In some European countries, the term "research management and administration" or simply "research management" is more commonly used. In Africa, the terms "research management", "research support" and "research administration" are all used interchangeably. Research management encompasses various initiatives implemented by a university to improve its researchers' productivity, without directly engaging in the research process itself. Such initiatives may include promoting academic awareness of research ethics and integrity through educational programs. According to the Southern African Research & Management Association, this involves a value chain approach that extends from research to developing a transferable Professional Competency Framework (PCF), which delineates essential cross-cutting skills within research management. This paper argues that the function of research management extends well beyond mere administrative support. Research managers must possess an in-depth level of expertise in their respective fields, which necessitates a high level of academic acumen in addition to their administrative responsibilities. This raises a critical question: who are we in this context? A compelling illustration of this concept can be found in the realms of research grants and research ethics, where a nuanced understanding and active engagement are essential for effective management and oversight.

The dichotomy between administrative and academic duties in research management poses significant challenges and opportunities for research outcomes, institutional effectiveness, and the professional development of research managers. Understanding how these two roles interact and influence the research ecosystem is essential for addressing institutional goals, improving research outputs, and fostering growth among research managers. This paper will employ a literature analysis to further explore these distinctions and provide a comprehensive understanding of the roles and responsibilities within research management.

## — Research collaboration: A fresh perspective on strengthening networks for sustainable impact

**Mrs Doret Kruger**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>North-West University, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Doret Kruger, a professional, integrates nursing, business management, and academics into her career. Her educational journey spans nursing and business management, finishing her MBA from NWU. Currently pursuing a PhD at AUTHeR, her research focuses on a model to develop survivalist entrepreneurs in SA collective culture, blending entrepreneurship, education, and psychology. Doret's career path includes diverse roles, from Nursing, Accounting, Senior Commercialization Specialist, and currently the Manager: Higher Degrees Academic Support. Externally, she's an examiner, study leader, and contributor to international conferences and accredited journal publications, showcasing her dedication to innovation and research in South Africa.

In today's fast-evolving research landscape, research collaboration requires a new perspective beyond traditional networks to create an integrated and impact-driven research environment. At North-West University (NWU), we are rethinking research collaboration by fostering governance models that bridge intra-and extramural networks, ensuring partnerships aligned with the NWU strategic pillars.

The strategic priorities of impact, growth, diversity, partnership and internationalisation are shaping a holistic research management approach that encourages multi-disciplinary engagement, aligning with the mission of the university. By embedding collaborative research practices, NWU is creating an enabling environment for effective knowledge exchange and sustainability research impact, responsive to the needs of diverse local and global populations.

The submission explores how NWU's strategic priorities are shaping a holistic research management framework including the development of digital collaboration platforms, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary engagement and strengthening international partnerships. By embedding collaboration into governance structure, NWU is creating an enabling environment for effective knowledge exchange and sustainable research impact.

Through this case study, we contribute to the discourse on the evolving role of research managers in fostering inclusive and trust-driven collaboration networks. This insights shared will highlight practical solutions for building a research ecosystem that is responsive, connected and predisposition for global impact.

## — Building entrepreneurial ecosystems within state owned enterprises: A pathway to sustainable innovation

**Dr Kim Lamont-Mbawuli<sup>1</sup>**, Mrs Nasima Mahomed<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mintek, Randburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dr. Kim Lamont-Mbawuli completed her Hons. MSc, and PhD at the University of Cape Town (UCT). In 2015, she earned an MPhil in Intellectual Property Law, focusing on copyright in distance learning. She completed two post-doctoral fellowships, specialising in the use of technology in telemedicine. She earned her LLB at UNISA in 2019 and was admitted as an attorney in 2020. She has adopted unique approach that blends her diverse experiences to identify, protect, and strategically leverage technologies. She specialises in dissecting complex scientific ideas, spotting commercial applications, and anticipating challenges, ensuring technologies are not only patentable but commercially viable.

South Africa's National System of Innovation (NSI) underscores the critical role of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in driving technological advancement and economic development. While research councils and SOEs play a key role in generating knowledge and addressing industrial challenges, translating these outputs into commercially viable innovations remains a persistent challenge. This abstract explores strategies for fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems within SOEs by strengthening commercialisation pathways and aligning them with the implementation of the Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act (IPR Act).

To bridge the gap between research and market-ready solutions, structured commercialisation frameworks and collaborative innovation models are essential. Establishing innovation-driven ecosystems within SOEs fosters a culture of entrepreneurship by integrating commercial thinking into research and development activities. Through public-private partnerships, technology transfer mechanisms, and industry engagement, SOEs can accelerate the commercialisation of technologies, ensuring their impact extends beyond research outputs to tangible economic and societal benefits.

A well-integrated commercialisation strategy within SOEs not only strengthens South Africa's innovation landscape but also contributes to job creation, industry competitiveness, and sustainable economic growth. By embedding commercialisation at the core of their innovation activities, SOEs can enhance their role within the NSI, translating scientific advancements into real-world applications that support national development objectives.

## — Patent strategies for startups and entrepreneurs in the R&D ecosystem

**Mr Tim Laurens**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>KISCH IP, Sandton, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Tim is an Associate at KISCH IP currently working in the patent and design prosecution department where he services clients, both locally and abroad. Having completed a degree in Chemical Engineering, Tim has a focus on drafting patents in the fields of chemistry, chemical processes, pharmaceuticals, blockchain and software-related technology.

In addition, Tim has a background in commercial litigation, most pertinently, in the field of unlawful competition related to the misuse of confidential information, know-how, trade secrets, and restraint of trade agreements.

Early-stage innovators in resource-constrained environments often grapple with how to secure global patent protection without incurring prohibitive costs. This presentation provides a strategic overview of patent filing approaches that enable entrepreneurs to gain competitive advantage while managing risk and budgets. We begin by examining the low-cost option of filing a South African provisional patent application, followed by a potential Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) filing to obtain a Written Opinion and Search Report. Alternatively, we explore the benefits of filing a Dutch priority-founding application, which leverages an EPO search, or a UK provisional application, which comes with a Search Report and Written Opinion from the UK Patent Office. These early insights into examiner perspectives help refine IP strategy by clarifying patentability, highlighting weaknesses, and sharpening research and development efforts.

Beyond initial filings, we discuss the choice between direct Paris Convention complete applications or continuing via the PCT route for broader international coverage. Participants will learn to weigh variables such as target jurisdictions, potential licensing revenue, and the need for ongoing R&D. By examining key cost-sensitive decision points and exploring how licensing can offset expenses, attendees will leave equipped with actionable insights on navigating patent procurement efficiently, maximizing the commercial value of their innovations, and ensuring global competitiveness in today's dynamic landscape.

## — Empowering early-career researchers and emerging scientists: The role of research management & innovation professionals

**Mr Levert Louw<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Levert Louw is a dynamic Research Grants Administrator at Stellenbosch University's Research Grants Office, bringing expertise in research funding, administration, and strategic support for academic initiatives. With a deep passion for local government, community development.

With six years of experience in tertiary education administration, Levert possesses a keen understanding of the challenges and opportunities in research development. Having already presented at two conferences, Levert is eager to engage with broader academic and professional audiences, sharing insights on effective research management, community-engaged scholarship, and institutional partnerships.

Early-career researchers (ECRs) and emerging scientists play a crucial role in advancing knowledge and innovation. However, they face significant challenges, including limited research funding, high administrative and teaching responsibilities, and intense pressure to publish. Additionally, restricted access to research infrastructure, mentorship, and collaboration opportunities can hinder their career progression. Job insecurity, work-life balance concerns, and a lack of awareness regarding intellectual property and commercialization further impact their professional growth.

Research Management and Administration (RMA) professionals provide vital support by managing research funding, ensuring compliance, and offering administrative assistance. Their efforts include creating structured mentorship programs, facilitating grant applications, and providing training on essential academic skills such as research project management and career development. These initiatives help researchers navigate the complexities of academia while focusing on scientific discovery.

Innovation & Technology Transfer (I&TT) professionals complement these efforts by bridging the gap between academia and industry. They play a key role in transforming research into practical applications through patents, commercialization, and industry collaborations. By guiding researchers through the innovation ecosystem, they enhance the societal impact of academic discoveries.

This poster presentation highlights the indispensable role of RMA and I&TT professionals in shaping the research landscape. It underscores how these professionals are not just facilitators but active enablers of research success. By fostering an environment that supports ECRs and emerging scientists, they contribute to the sustainability of research excellence and the translation of innovation into real-world solutions. Their collaborative efforts are essential in cultivating a thriving and impactful research ecosystem that benefits both academia and society

## — Promoting gender equity in applying and attaining NRF rating in South African Universities: Review of practice

**Mr John Mamokhere<sup>1</sup>, Ms Katileho Mokwatsi**

<sup>1</sup>University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Mr John Mamokhere is a Research Administrator at the University of Johannesburg, with five years of experience in research grant management and postgraduate scholarship administration within higher education institutions. He holds a master's degree in public management and governance from the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. His expertise lies in facilitating research funding, supporting postgraduate scholars, and ensuring effective grant administration to enhance academic and research excellence.

The apartheid regime in South Africa has also contributed to gender disparities in higher education. Gender equality (SDG 5) is a UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), and higher education institutions can contribute by creating healthy, socially just conditions for female academic staff. Prioritizing gender equality is crucial for growth and development, considering the unique cultural burdens of South African women. Gender equity remains a critical challenge in South African universities and science councils, particularly in the attainment of National Research Foundation (NRF) ratings. Despite efforts to promote inclusivity, female researchers continue to be disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts in securing NRF ratings, which are essential for academic recognition and career advancement. The study aims to explore and review existing practices and strategies aimed at fostering gender equity in the NRF rating system. To explore this, the study used a qualitative research methodology and review secondary data. In 2024 submissions, at the University of X, it was found that 31 applications were from females and 73 applications were from males. This disparity is also recognised even at the success rate nationally. For first-time rated researchers, according to the NRF Rating dashboard dated 13 February 2025, it was found that 30% of the applications successful were from female researchers while 70% was from male researchers. The study recommends key interventions such as targeted workshops, structured mentoring programs, and institutional support mechanisms designed to empower female researchers. By addressing systemic barriers and implementing these supportive measures, South African universities can create a more equitable research environment that enhances female participation and recognition in academia. Lastly, it is encouraged that the SA universities should align their efforts with the SDGs to lead to a more equitable and sustainable future.

## — A review of publication count process at RSO and assessing research productivity at Rhodes University

**Ms Thumeka Mantolo**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Ms Thumeka Mantolo is currently the Manager for Research Administration at Rhodes University, responsible for the university's statutory reporting requirements of annual submission of Research Output data to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). She has over a decade of experience in research management and administration in Higher Education, having worked at DHET for over 6 years dealing with publications, policy development and sector liaison, before joining Rhodes University in 2013. Ms Mantolo's area of interest is research publication trends and data analysis.

Rhodes University's publication count process is a structured system for tracking and reporting research outputs, with the aim of maximizing both research productivity and the potential for attracting research funding. Rhodes University's research outputs are submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for the allocation of government subsidy. This vital process has direct influence on the amount of funding the university receives from the government. This process is guided by the Research Outputs Policy (2015)

Managing of the Publication count process is a complex task. The process can be time- consuming and requires careful attention to detail to ensure accuracy and ensuring that the outputs submitted meet the criteria of accreditation in order to qualify for inclusion in the publication count. Research managers are at the forefront of driving this process and policy implementation.

“For policy implementation to be successful, it is fundamental for institutions to have the necessary administrative and other abilities required to carry out the implementation process. The research revealed that it is important for higher education institutions to have the necessary skills and resources to implement the Policy. These necessary skills and resources include the availability of sufficient numbers of qualified staff within the research offices to evaluate and capture research output data, and also academic and research staff having skills and greater ability to perform useful research, together with financial resources and infrastructure that will allow them to effectively engage in and produce quality research”



## — Calm waters never make skilled research managers: Traversing challenges of AI in an ethical manner

**Mr Ashwin Manuel**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa

The emergence, growth, expansion, and usage of artificial intelligence (AI) have necessitated that accompanying changes in research ethics are mandatory rather than optional, given that research ethics guidelines have generally developed on an ex post facto basis (a Latin phrase that essentially means "retroactive" something that's already happened, Nuremburg Trials, Tuskegee Report, Belmont report to name a few) as opposed to a more proactive stance. This comes as research ethics on the African continent is significantly different from its understanding and implementation in the global north and developed world.

On a macro level, the reliance on data derived from artificial intelligence (AI), large learning models (LLM's) and big data (BD) has placed increased and sustained pressure on acquiring data, its security, and more commonly, the sharing of data across borders to be housed in datasets in various parts of the globe. Despite these advances, in the final analysis, these data entries are derived from research participants who in essence, practiced altruism (an ethical disposition concerned with the wellbeing of others/collective independent of personal benefit or reciprocity) and consented to participate in a research study.

On a meso level, the presence of research norms and standards are essential guideposts that any individual in research management should consult on a frequent basis.

Moreover, at a micro level as big as AI is, the heart of research ethics lies the invaluable currency of trust between the participant and the researcher, which are guided by the recommendations of REC's and REC managers who navigate these sometimes-choppy waters. When calamity strikes, the test here for RM management) and research managers in particular lies in their response to balance multiple competing interests and supporting technological advances. This is the tension created by AI that this poster presentation will seek to address and respond to.

## — Towards building an outcomes-based model in social franchising of product-service systems: A scoping review

Associate Professor Faatiema Salie<sup>1</sup>, **Dr Thembinkosi Maphosa**<sup>2</sup>, Ms Aisha Mahomed Ali<sup>2</sup>, Prof Abdullah Bayat<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa, <sup>2</sup>University of the Western Cape, Bellville, Cape Town, South Africa

### Biography:

Thembinkosi Maphosa is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Technology Transfer Office at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. His research focuses on developing financial innovation strategies for social innovation initiatives in low-income communities, with a particular emphasis on technology transfer and commercialization.

Maphosa holds a PhD in a field related to sustainable development and renewable energy. His doctoral research explored the financial sustainability challenges of renewable energy-efficiency projects in low-income communities, using Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects as a case study. His research is well-positioned to contribute to the development of innovative solutions for low-income communities.

This paper presents a scoping review of the emerging intersections between social franchising, outcome-based models (OBMs), and product-service systems (PSS). Social franchising, a model for achieving social goals through branded, quality-assurance products and services, is gaining traction as a means to rapidly scale social initiatives. This review explores how integrating OBMs, where payment is tied to the realization of specific outcomes, and PSS, which combines tangible products with actionable services, can enhance social franchising. The central research question is: "How have OBMs been incorporated into social franchising for PSS and servitization?"

Methodologically, this study adheres to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis-Scoping Review (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines. A comprehensive search was conducted in Scopus and Web of Science using specific keywords related to franchising, outcome-based models, and product-service systems. The search yielded an initial pool of 94 and 98 documents, respectively, which was then narrowed down to a final dataset of scientific publications after a screening process based on pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data was extracted and coded using Atlas.ti.23.1 and analyzed thematically and bibliometrically using Biblioshiny.

The preliminary results highlight several key themes, including franchising as a business model, social franchising as a business model, and supply chain coordination. The review identifies various contextual settings, franchising models, and defined outcome-based models within the selected literature. The findings of this review will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how OBMs and PSS can be effectively integrated into social franchising to improve the delivery and impact of social initiatives, particularly in the context of last-mile pharmaceutical cold chain logistics.

**Keywords:** franchising; value-based models; outcome-based models; product service systems, systematic review

## — Funding for impact: A review of the University of the Free State's central research fund

**Mr Mpho Mashamba**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

### **Biography:**

With seven years of experience in Research management, Mpho Mashamba holds an LLM in Human Rights from UFS, an Honors in Criminology and a B.Soc.Sc undergraduate degree. He has training and certification in research and workplace ethics training as well as java script. Currently Mpho Mashamba works as an officer at the Directorate for Research Development at UFS. Where he is responsible for the development of the Research Information management Systems' Funding, Tech Transfer module, Research Outputs and Disclosures modules. In addition, He acts as the pre-review and post faculty review officer of Central research Funds Application on RIMS.

Through Vision 130, the UFS aspires to be an institution that is (1) student centred by promoting learning experiences, academic strategies, and forms of assistance that address varying needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Thereby committing to being an institution that is socially transformative. (2) The UFS aspires to be a regionally engaged institution that contributes to the knowledge and the development of the Free State province. (3), The UFS aspires to be a globally competitive institution that produces graduates that are equipped to take on global economic, scientific and social challenges.

Furthermore, the UFS aspires to be a (4) research-led institution. This emphasises the institutions need to increase its research capacity and capability. This aspiration finds place in Vision 130's 'Academic Excellence, Quality and Impact' tenet. This tenet is also listed by the institution as Goal 1 of its 2023-2028 strategic plan. Goal 1 contains three objectives, namely (i) Placing increased emphasis on research that advances societal and knowledge impact, (ii) Ensuring the quantity, quality, and diversity of academic staff with renowned global reputation, and (ii) ensure that academic offerings and practices produce desirable and successful graduates.

This paper focuses on how the UFS' Directorate for Research Development has leveraged data from its eRIMS platform to create an internal (CRF) funding model. Requests are made via RIMS, with multiple 'check' points to ensure that internally funded research projects are aligned to the university's Vision 130. This paper further focuses on the collaborative nature of the review process between the Directorate for Research Development (DRD) and the various academic faculty's.

## — Empowering young innovators: Faculty mentorship as a catalyst for research commercialization

**Dr Limbanazo Matandika**<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Lucy Moyo<sup>1</sup>, Mr Francis Masi<sup>1</sup>, Mr Livison Msonthe<sup>1</sup>, Dr Madalitso Tsakama<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### Biography:

Limbanazo holds a PhD in Public Health, specializing in research ethics, from the University of Malawi, College of Medicine (2023). She is a Research Ethics Administrator at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences. A trained Social Scientist and Bioethicist, she is passionate about innovation. Recently, she contributed to a project developing a diagnostic tool. Limbanazo employs empirical approaches to bridge the gap between end users, innovators, and engineering requirements. Her work ensures ethical research practices while fostering technological advancements that meet user needs effectively.

**Introduction:** Institutions of higher learning produce valuable scholarly work across various fields. However, translating these insights into practical applications for economic development remains limited. This gap prevents research from fully benefiting national progress. The University Innovation Pod (UNIPOD) at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) in Malawi is an innovation and entrepreneurship center dedicated to providing technical support to young people in school to harness their creativity and maker spirit. The hub offers enterprise services to the private sector and recently incubated its first cohort of faculty and students through the translation Faculty-Student Programme (FSP). The primary goal of the FSP is to translate academic research and innovation into market-ready products. This program focuses on various themes, including healthcare solutions, education technologies, disaster management, agricultural technology, creative, and financial technologies. This abstract outlines the approach of the FSP, emphasizing the role of faculty mentorship in guiding students through the innovation and commercialization process.

**The Proposed Approach:** The FSP is a six-month program pairing one faculty member with two students. The faculty member must be from an accredited Malawian tertiary institution, have completed research suitable for product development, and be a Malawian resident throughout the program. Participants gain access to:

1. Prototyping & Technical Support
2. Intellectual Property & Technology Transfer
3. Business Development & Funding

**Conclusion:** The FSP empowers students with practical skills, real-world experience, and networking opportunities. This approach significantly enhances capacity-building initiatives in innovations by providing a structured and supportive environment for young innovators. Faculty mentorship plays a critical role in guiding students through the innovation process, helping them develop essential skills and knowledge.

## — Strengthening ethical competence in innovation: Developing education tools for innovators and stakeholders in Africa

**Dr Limbanazo Matandika**<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Lucy Moyo<sup>1</sup>, Mr George Sinjani<sup>1</sup>, Mr Francis Masi<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Chikondi Mphamba<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Tisaukirenji Tembo<sup>1</sup>, Dr Dickson Ndenguma<sup>1</sup>, Mr Livison Msonthe<sup>1</sup>, Ms Hope Khasu<sup>1</sup>, Dr Madalitso Tsakama<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

Limbanazo holds a PhD in Public Health, specializing in research ethics, from the University of Malawi, College of Medicine (2023). She is a Research Ethics Administrator at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences. A trained Social Scientist and Bioethicist, she is passionate about innovation. Recently, she contributed to a project developing a diagnostic tool. Limbanazo employs empirical approaches to bridge the gap between end users, innovators, and engineering requirements. Her work ensures ethical research practices while fostering technological advancements that meet user needs effectively.

**Introduction:** In recent years, Africa has witnessed significant growth in technology and innovation. These emerging innovations demonstrate potential in addressing health, social, economic, and environmental challenges [1]. However, the development and utilisation of various innovations can raise significant ethical concerns. Across many low- and middle-income countries, there is a lack of necessary frameworks, systems, and skills to comprehensively address ethical dimensions and promote responsible innovations. Our goal is to develop ethical competence of innovators and co-produce ethical education materials and tools that will guide innovators understanding of ethical and responsible innovations. When developed, the education materials will provide guidance to stakeholders on how to develop and adapt various innovations in ways that align with ethical principles and societal values.

**Methodology:** Addressing ethics in research and innovation is becoming increasingly urgent due to the transformative potential and complexity of contemporary scientific and technological advancements [2]. The proposed project will employ an action-based research approach in three phases. Initially, we will conduct in-depth interviews with Innovators, policy makers and regulators to assess knowledge, attitudes and perceptions (KAP) on ethical and responsible innovation development. The second phase will interview shortlisted innovators in order to gain comprehensive insights into the ethics capacity needs of stakeholders. We aim to create teaching case studies by understanding in-depth descriptions of ethical issues affecting innovators during the development of a product. Finally, we aim to develop an ethics training manual that can be used by all innovation stakeholders at MUBAS and beyond to increase ethical knowledge, skills, and responsible behaviour in innovations

**Conclusion:** We anticipate that developing this practical ethics training manual will enhance ethical awareness and decision-making. It will provide clear guidelines and tools to address ethical challenges. This manual will foster a culture of responsible innovation with global relevance, boosting the credibility of innovations developed locally.

## — Pre-award audit within the UCT faculty of Health Sciences: An analysis of researcher grant-seeking behaviour

**Ms Boitumelo Mdluli**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Boitumelo Mdluli is a seasoned research professional with expertise in pre-award planning. As Grants Coordinator in the Faculty Research Office, Boitumelo provides administrative pre-award support and co-ordination of national and international funding proposals for Faculty of Health Sciences researchers and research groupings. With a deep understanding of funding agencies and a proven track record of success, Boitumelo is dedicated to empowering researchers to secure funding and advance their research endeavors in improving health outcomes.

The pre-award stage is an important step in the grant life cycle for ensuring funding proposals meet both institutional and funder requirements. Without a well-structured pre-award system institutions risk delay, non-compliance, financial mismanagement and missed funding opportunities. At the University of Cape Town (UCT), research proposals require careful oversight before submission to funders. The Research Development team within the UCT Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) Research Office is tasked with supporting the faculty's significant research enterprise. The team provides support to researchers through the identification and distribution of suitable research funding opportunities, proposal development support, guiding researchers through UCT's internal submission processes, and communications support for research activities.

Over an 11-month period (January-November 2024) a total of 272 FHS research proposals were reviewed and approved by the pre-award approvals team, comprising a Faculty Finance Approver, and Final Faculty Approvers. These reviews and approvals are managed via the UCT Electronic Research Administration (Era) system, which has become a 'one-stop shop' to manage and track the administrative workflow within a project lifecycle and beyond. The Research Development team also makes use of an Intention-to-Submit (ItS) form and a Letter-of-Support (LoS) Request form to provide a structured approach to supporting research proposals and pre-award approvals thereof.

This abstract investigates FHS researcher behaviour, including adherence to internal deadlines, and the impact of the support provided by the research development team (i.e. use of the ItS form and LoS request form) in workload management and engagements within the pre-award approval team(s).

**Conclusion:** The use of the ItS form and LoS request form provides a structured approach to supporting research proposals, improving visibility into upcoming submissions and enabling better planning.

## — Exploring blockchain smart contracts for intellectual property transactions in research management and technology transfer

**Mr Lucky Mokalusi**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Central University of Technology, Bloemfontein, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Technology Analyst [TEMP], currently pursuing professional recognition as a Registered Technology Transfer Professional (RTTP). Holding a Master of Engineering in Electrical Engineering (Cum Laude), he has over 10 years of industry-related experience in designing and testing products for commercial purposes with societal impact. His academic career includes over 2 years as a Lecturer Assistant at the Central University of Technology and 7 years as a Technical Training Manager, supervising research projects for Work Integrated Learning. With international journal articles published, he brings a wealth of expertise in Research Management and Technology Transfer.

Blockchain smart contracts are becoming increasingly significant in research management and technology transfer. Their adoption is driven by key advantages such as automation, enhanced security, transparency, and traceability. The establishment of the WIPO Blockchain Task Force highlights the global effort to integrate blockchain technology into the intellectual property (IP) ecosystem. This paper explores the integration of blockchain smart contracts into research management and technology transfer, emphasizing their potential to streamline intellectual property (IP) rights transactions and unlock the value of research and innovation management. The study examines how blockchain smart contracts can automate administrative tasks within research management and technology transfer processes. A key challenge motivating this research is the inefficiency in IP rights transactions and related administrative tasks, including identification, protection, development, commercialization, and benefit-sharing. These inefficiencies often result in higher costs, disputes, and delays. This research hypothesizes that blockchain smart contracts can address these challenges by automating administrative tasks, thereby enhancing efficiency, accuracy, and innovation. Ultimately, the adoption of blockchain-based solutions in research management and technology transfer can create a more transparent, reduces administrative overhead and minimizes human errors for all stakeholders.

## — A day in life of financial research administrator: Coaching researchers through maze of financial transactions

**Ms Kelebogile Motsage**<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Carin Niemand<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Kelebogile Motsage is a dedicated Research Support Secretary with experience facilitating researchers' administrative and financial processes. She is critical in supporting financial transactions and compliance with institutional policies. Her expertise is coordinating research funding processes, assisting researchers with financial claims, and ensuring all documentation meets regulatory requirements. Passionate about researcher support, she actively engages in training initiatives to help researchers navigate financial complexities. Through her meticulous attention to detail and strong problem-solving skills, she ensures that financial research administration runs smoothly, fostering a collaborative and efficient research environment.

Financial Research Administrators (FRAs) play a crucial role in bridging the gap between researchers and institutional financial compliance, ensuring smooth and efficient financial transactions. Their responsibilities range from managing research grants, ensuring compliance with funder regulations, and troubleshooting financial bottlenecks that researchers encounter in their work. This poster explores the daily realities of an FRA navigating the complexities of grant claims, reimbursements, and financial compliance while supporting researchers in overcoming challenges related to institutional policies and funder regulations.

Using real-world scenarios, we highlight the essential soft skills—such as communication, patience, problem-solving, and relationship-building—that enable FRAs to coach researchers through financial processes, as well as the hard skills—policy interpretation, financial system navigation, fund disbursement management and financial reporting—needed to ensure compliance and efficiency.

Financial transactions in research are often met with resistance, confusion, or frustration from researchers who find financial processes overwhelming. This poster will illustrate common pain points, strategies for overcoming them, and how FRAs serve as both financial stewards and educators. By demonstrating a proactive approach through training workshops, streamlined standard operating procedures (SOPs), and improved communication channels, this session will provide practical insights for research administrators looking to enhance their financial support structures.

By showcasing best practices in financial research administration, this poster will offer valuable takeaways on how institutions can empower FRAs to act as key enablers of research success, ensuring seamless financial workflows and fostering a culture of compliance and efficiency.



## — Enhancing research information management: A case study of strategic tool deployment at Stellenbosch University

**Ms Puseletso Motsomane**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Puseletso is part of Stellenbosch University's Division for Research Development (DRD)'s Grants Office, where she supports academic staff on key international funding programs, including Horizon Europe and EU-SA Joint Programmes. As the primary contact for the ResearchConnect platform, she distributes funding opportunities and helps researchers navigate international calls. Puseletso has extensive experience collaborating with South African National Contact Points (NCPs) at the Department of Science, Technology, and Innovation (DSTI), helping researchers maximize their opportunities for success in international research funding. She has a BSc Honours degree and is currently pursuing a second post-graduate qualification, in Knowledge and Information Systems Management.

Research Information Management (RIM) plays a crucial role in helping institutions adapt to the evolving research landscape, addressing challenges such as funding diversification and collaboration. This study focuses on the strategic deployment of RIM tools at Stellenbosch University, specifically ResearchConnect, a funding database, and Crowdhelix, a research partner matching tool. While ResearchConnect has been effective in identifying diverse funding opportunities, Crowdhelix has not met expectations.

This case study explores the factors influencing the uptake and use of RIM tools by researchers, aiming to leverage their full potential and maximize opportunities. It examines current usage patterns, identifies barriers to adoption, and investigates the reasons behind the success of ResearchConnect and the underperformance of Crowdhelix. By understanding researchers' needs, the study will propose strategies to improve tool adoption. Ultimately, the goal is to align RIM practices with institutional priorities, promote collaboration, and foster a data-driven, agile research environment that supports global and institutional objectives.

This research contributes to the broader RIM discourse by offering practical recommendations for institutions navigating the unpredictable research funding landscape. It underscores the importance of adaptive strategies that support collaboration, visibility, and data-driven decision-making in a rapidly changing environment.

## — Overcoming challenges in research ethics: Strategies for strengthening ethical oversight at MUBAS

**Mrs Lucy Moyo**<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Limbanazo Matandika

<sup>1</sup>Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

A newly initiated Compliance Officer with a passion for helping to lead the University by ensuring they are functioning in complete compliance with all national and international rules and regulations to do with research ethics and integrity. I possess excellent communication skills, allowing for the cultivation of positive and mutually beneficial business relationships, while keeping strong ethics at the forefront of my goals. I intend to bring forth a superior knowledge of Research ethics compliance. I am currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration student, at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS).

Research ethics should be closely aligned with strong governance systems, as emphasized by Magalhães (2024). This alignment presents significant challenges at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS), where the research culture is weak. The recent establishment of the MUBAS Research Ethics Committee (MUBASREC) aimed to enhance ethical oversight and streamline the research proposal process. However, the REC faces several obstacles due to MUBAS' limited research infrastructure. These challenges include insufficient financial and human resources, and difficulties enforcing ethical guidelines. Additionally, researchers often view ethical oversight as bureaucratic, which complicates the penetration of ethical practices in a weak research culture. To address these issues, MUBASREC has implemented strategies, including capacity-building and increased awareness, to foster a more ethical research environment and improve the acceptance of ethical practices within the institution. Despite these efforts, resistance and conflicting priorities remain key hurdles that threaten the sustainability and effectiveness of the REC, as highlighted by Bouter (2023).

**Proposed Strategies to Enhance Good Research Practices:** To enhance the uptake of research ethics and good practices at MUBAS, we recognized the need to address resistance through awareness, sensitization, training, and lobbying for institutional support. The MUBASREC Secretariat organized training workshops and engagement activities, including seminars and webinars, to involve researchers, staff, and students. Additionally, tools were developed to improve the quality of ethics submissions and strengthen ethical competency and their significance. These strategies have also fostered open communication and encouraged the MUBAS research community to actively engage with the REC.

**Conclusion:** To enhance the uptake of research ethics at MUBAS, we propose continued awareness campaigns, training, and institutional support. Strengthening engagement through workshops, open communication, and ethics tools will improve compliance and foster a culture of responsible research. Sustained capacity-building and institutional backing is essential for long-term success.

## — Building REC administrators capacity to enhance quality of ethics review: The case of NWU-REC administrators

**Ms Feziwe Mseleni**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>North-West University, Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Coordinator for the Ethics & Integrity program at North-West University and a recipient of the Anderson-Kleinert Diversity Award from the 8th World Conference on Research Integrity. In 2024, she obtained professional recognition as a Research Administration Professional (RAP) accredited by the International Professional Recognition Council. She is a certified VIRT2UE Trainer. She is an early-career social scientist passionate about research ethics (RE) and integrity (RI). She has an undergraduate degree from Walter Sisulu University and an honors degree in Psychology from UNISA. She gained valuable experience in various organizations, enhancing her knowledge and skills in RE and RI.

**Background:** The research ethics landscape is dynamic. Capacity building is critical, especially for research ethics committees (REC). Despite the crucial role REC administrators play in the operations of REC, their capacity needs are often neglected. The National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) requires RECs to ensure adequate capacity of their administrators owing to the specialized skills needed to serve the REC efficiently. According to the SARIMA competency framework, REC administrators must possess the following skills: understanding the full research cycle, familiarity with research ethics and integrity philosophies, ability to judge acceptable norms of integrity, and administration of research ethics processes, procedures, systems, and records to support RECs. Despite these standards, the extent to which RECs apply them remains unclear.

**Problem statement:** Despite the need for specialized skills, REC administrators often face challenges such as understanding the fundamental principles of research ethics, guiding researchers in protocol submission under tight deadlines, screening protocols for submission, acting as a liaison between researchers, REC chairpersons, and committee members, and ensuring the smooth functioning of the committee while managing pressure from protocol deadlines for grants.

**Objective:** Using the NWU as a case study, we aim to assess how RECs can comply with the SARIMA competency framework and NHREC requirements.

**Method:** A cross-sectional survey will be conducted with all the NWU REC administrators to understand what efforts have been made by the RECs to comply with the SARIMA competency framework and NHREC requirements. A presentation will focus on the outcome of the survey, including the response rate, the demographic attributes of the respondents, and the thematic analysis of the findings. The findings will inform challenges in complying with the SARIMA competency framework and NHREC requirements and inform future strategies for enhancing REC administrators' capacity.

## — Research funding as a mechanism for strengthening capacity development in South African Universities

**Mr Tshediso David Msibi**<sup>1</sup>, Ms Malebo Mohlala<sup>1</sup>, **Mr John Mamokhere**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Mr. Msibi is a dedicated Research Officer at the University of Johannesburg, specializing in research grants management. With over a decade of experience in research management, he has played a pivotal role in supporting both emerging and established researchers in securing funding, managing research projects, and ensuring compliance with grant requirements. His expertise extends to facilitating research development initiatives, fostering collaborations, and contributing to the strategic growth of research activities within the institution. Academically, Mr. Msibi holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, complemented by two Honours degrees in Sociology and Psychology, respectively.

In South Africa, a major concern is the continuous decrease in research outputs among emerging researchers, emanating from limited capacity, access to research funding. The inadequate funding has created a vicious cycle, where universities, whose research resources are limited, often fail to improve their academic and research outputs, resulting in limited research publications and fewer contributions to the global academic community. Given the research culture of “publish or perish” among universities, research institutes and scholars, a lack of research funding has driven many emerging academics out of academia to seek opportunities abroad, exacerbating the country's skills shortage. It is argued that most emerging researchers experience challenges in attempting to acquire research funding opportunities. This study intends to analyse research funding related challenges and mechanisms employed by the University(ies) in supporting emerging researchers. This study adopted a qualitative research design. The authors also used multiple sources such as observation and existing documents to collect data. The preliminary findings indicate a decline in research infrastructure, limited research capacity, and a shortage of academic staff. It highlights how funding constraints contribute to a cycle of limited research outputs and a brain-drain of young academics seeking opportunities abroad. Based on the above preliminary findings, the study recommends strengthening of the research funding models by transitioning more towards outward facing approaches which seek to build funding and research partnerships on which young and emerging researchers can ride on. These include encouraging external collaboration and participation by emerging researchers as well as continuing to subscribe to funding databases. The study also emphasises that grantsmanship and mentorship should be inclusive to empower emerging researchers to write fundable proposals. The study recommends that although internal funding is limited and competitive in nature, a deliberate policy shift towards empowering emerging and female researchers should be considered.

## — Identification of skills development to empower RMAs navigating disruption

**Ms Mudanalo Mulaudzi**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Ms. Mulaudzi Mudanalo Rejoice is a Research Administrator at Wits Enterprise (Pty) Ltd in University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. She holds a Bcom Accounting and Finance degree from Wits. Completed Research Grants and Contracts Management (Distinction) and Fundamentals in Research Management short courses at Wits Digital Campus which are SARIMA courses. I am a mother to a beautiful 9-year old daughter.

As research administrators we are mandated with record keeping and documentation of project information. This poster will investigate the challenges, I as a Research Management Administrator, encounter specifically around the collection of information required to make payments to suppliers and the potential challenges and consequences that could result. These challenges include stakeholders not submitting all the requested documentation, or these documents being incorrectly completed.

The consequences of these omissions can result in delayed payments and more significantly deviations from contracted payment timelines and ultimately audit findings if the records are not corrected and appropriately stored. This could impact on the integrity of the project that we manage and consequently the organisation and by extension our ability to engage in collaborative research.

Given these sensitivities, it is important for Research Administrators to be thorough with their handling of this type of project data. This includes:

1. Regular follow ups for missing documentation or correctly completed documentation
2. Ensuring that the filing procedures for the organisation are followed

The important skills that a RM administrator requires to navigate these challenges include:

1. Attention to detail
2. Familiarity with the current processes of the organisation
3. Communication skills, with both the supplier to guide the stakeholder through the process and internally to create awareness of the challenges especially where time sensitivity exists
4. Cultural sensitivity i.e. respecting others expertise, opinions and diverse backgrounds.

These are cross-cutting skills that can be applied to other activities that the RMA may be engaged with, since we as RMA's are required to master many aspects of RM work it is important to apply these skills in all areas of our practice.

## — Fostering institutional research and innovation culture for sustainable impact through a strong research support office

**Ms Afusa Nabuuma<sup>1</sup>, Ms Mariam Nanteza<sup>1</sup>, Ms Eunice Kajura<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>MRC/UVRI & LSHTM Uganda Research Unit, Entebbe, Uganda

### **Biography:**

Afusa Nabuuma is a Project Manager at the Research Support Office of MRC/UVRI, specializing in grants management, financial oversight, and research administration. She holds a BSc in Financial Mathematics, is pursuing an MBA, and is a Certified PRINCE2 Practitioner and PMP holder. Additionally, she is finalizing her CPA certification and has completed specialized training in grant writing (AREF), advanced Excel, and project management (EDCTP). Managing over 20 projects simultaneously, Afusa excels in project execution, compliance, and donor relations. She is a strategic thinker and problem solver passionate about research support and fostering impactful collaborations across disciplines.

**Background:** As the competition for research funding becomes tougher, institutions must set up effective support systems to help researchers improve the quality of research and boost innovation. A well-organized Research Support Office (RSO) is key to building research strength by offering strategic guidance, promoting teamwork, and ensuring that funding and regulatory requirements are met. This abstract discusses how institutions can use the RSO to create a dynamic research environment that attracts funding and yields significant social and economic benefits.

**Methodology:** The RSO strengthens research support through finding funding opportunities, improving the proposal development process, simplifying internal review and approval procedures, and ensuring that financial and ethical standards are followed. RSO highlights the importance of building research capacity, encouraging institutional collaboration, and using digital tools to help with grant management and reporting. By creating an environment where researchers receive personalized support throughout the research process, institutions can improve their chances of securing funding, promote cross-disciplinary collaboration, and increase research visibility.

**Results:** The RSO at MRC/UVRI Uganda and LSHTM Research Unit was established in 2017 with a team of 03 research administrators who supported a wide array of researchers and scientists. From just 126 grant applications submitted between 2019 and 2022, the RSO now submits about 56 grant applications per year on average. About 1,000 grant applications have been submitted to various funders including Wellcome Trust, European Union, National Institutes of Health, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The RSO boasts 10 staff with a grant portfolio of about 100 active projects, with more than 25 applications under contract review. This indicates a growth in researcher interest and confidence in the role of RSO.

**Conclusion:** By strengthening research support, institutions can create a sustainable innovation ecosystem that advances knowledge, influences policy, and benefits society.

## — Research ethics and unexpected challenges: Ensuring ethical integrity in clinical trials

**Mrs Ausaye Ngwira**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

My name is Atusaye Ngwira, a senior clinical research associate working for Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Department of Research and Innovation. I have 24 years of experience in clinical research. I hold Bachelor of Science in Health Management from University of Malawi, Diploma in Clinical Trial Monitoring and Certificate in Ethical Aspects in Clinical Research from University of Vienna, Austria. My tasks are Clinical Trial Monitoring, facilitation of International Conference Organization Good Clinical Practice, Coordinating CHEER Project-NIH Grant, Mentor and facilitator of Micro Research, research governance, archivists. I have strong organization and interpersonal skills which led into leadership roles.

**Introduction:** The Clinical Trial Monitoring Office within KUHeS (Kamuzu University of Health and Science) plays a pivotal role in overseeing research ethics and maintaining the integrity of clinical trials. Research ethics, a fundamental principle of responsible research, ensures the protection of participants' rights and safety while safeguarding data integrity<sup>1</sup>. However, research managers (RMs) often face unforeseen challenges that test the resilience of established ethical frameworks, requiring swift and thoughtful responses<sup>1</sup>. These challenges may arise in the form of data breaches, evolving regulatory landscapes, unforeseen participant circumstances, cultural sensitivities, or complexities in interdisciplinary collaborations. Such situations demand that RMs balance ethical duties with practical realities, maintaining transparency and accountability in research processes<sup>2</sup>. The primary objective is to explore methods, strategies, and guidelines utilized by the KUHeS to tackle these unexpected challenges while ensuring adherence to ethical principles.

**Methodology:** The qualitative study involved Key Informant interviews and desk research; the data was analyzed using thematic analysis in NVivo.

**Findings:** The study established that focusing on proactive measures, adaptable processes, and the incorporation of continuous risk assessments, stakeholder engagement, addressing evolving regulations, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration are key to ensuring ethical research standards. Barriers include budgeting, lack of commitment.

**Conclusion:** KUHeS's experience in overcoming challenges can serve as a model for research ethics management in clinical trials. Research managers can be equipped with tools to uphold ethical integrity amidst the unpredictable nature of clinical research, ensuring that ethical considerations remain at the forefront of responsible research.

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## — Fostering an institutional research and innovation culture for sustainable impact

**Ms Ntombiyenkosi Nkosi**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Central University of Technology (CUT), Bloemfontein, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Ntombiyenkosi Nkosi is a Commercialisation Officer at CUT, specializing in IP protection, technology transfer, and commercialization. A former Patent Examiner at CIPC, she has expertise in patent assessments and prior art searches. Trained by EPO, WIPO, and JPO, she holds BSc and Honours degrees in Chemistry and Computer Science from the University of Zululand.

Universities and research institutions play a central role in promoting innovation and social change through research, technology transfer and knowledge exchange. This abstract explores the importance of fostering robust research and innovation culture in these institutions to increase value creation, strengthen knowledge transfer pathways and promote societal engagement. Engaged universities are increasingly recognized for their role in addressing pressing societal needs through interdisciplinary approaches that lead to value-added research outputs and innovative solutions.

The changing landscape of higher education requires universities to adopt strategies that utilize the capabilities of research and technology transfer offices (RTOs). These offices improve institutional flexibility by facilitating technology transfer, building strategic partnerships and aligning research efforts with global trends such as sustainability, digital transformation and inclusive growth. Integrating these elements not only leads to economic and social benefits but also positions universities as key players in addressing complex societal challenges.

This submission invites further exploration of case studies and best practices that demonstrate how cultivating an institutional culture of research and innovation can lead to sustainable impact. By highlighting successful collaborations between academia, industry and societal actors, this work aims to illustrate the transformative potential of engaged universities in promoting a sustainable future.



## — Building a health innovation ecosystem at KUHeS: Bridging research, entrepreneurship, and impact in Malawi

**Ms Tadala Nsaliwa<sup>1</sup>, Mr Alfred Kunje<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

Tadala Nsaliwa is a dedicated development professional with expertise in research methodologies, project monitoring and evaluation, and strategic communication. Currently serving as a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at CDC HEALERS Project-KUHeS, she combines analytical rigor with a passion for impactful storytelling. Also, as a Communications and Marketing-Intern, Tadala designed communication strategies, manages digital platforms, and helps in producing promotional materials for research visibility. She thrives in bridging data-driven insights with creative engagement, coordinating events and crafting impact stories to foster stakeholder collaboration. Recognized for her meticulous work ethic and adaptability, Tadala is committed to advancing health and development through innovation and partnership.

**Introduction:** Malawi faces many health and economic challenges that all require certain localized solutions. Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS) is poised to turn research into scalable innovations. However, KUHeS' progress is slowed by inadequate institutional structures, little support for entrepreneurship, and partnerships that are not united. Guided by three objectives-(1) proposing strategies to strengthen institutional innovation frameworks, (2) identifying effective entrepreneurship mechanisms to translate health research into scalable startups, and (3) developing partnership models that align with Malawi's national health priorities, this study seeks to explore how KUHeS can construct a particularly strong innovation ecosystem, informed by the African Union's framework (2020), connecting research to meaningful social effect.

**Methodology:** The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating multiple case studies of Malawi University of Business and Applied Science (MUBAS), Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), and the University of Malawi (UNIMA) alongside interviews with industry leaders, Ministry of Health officials, and KUHeS researchers. Policy analyses of successful African innovation ecosystems, in addition to stakeholder co-design workshops, will inform those solutions to develop focused resolutions. Communication strategies for large researcher engagement as well as wide-ranging investor outreach will be carefully integrated.

**Expected Significance/Impact:** Expected outcomes feature a detailed roadmap for KUHeS to establish a Technology Transfer Office (informed by MUBAS's IP governance successes) and a health innovation incubator (modeled on MUST's rural piloting initiatives). Strategic partnerships with Malawi's Ministry of Health and Partners in Health will grow Innovations' reach. By addressing inconsistent policies and funding gaps, KUHeS can catalyze socioeconomic transformation by converting research into life-saving startups, making healthcare easier, and creating jobs. These findings will offer a reproducible framework for African health Universities as they mindfully balance sustainability and social effect.

## — Leveraging Research Information Management (RIM) frameworks for enhanced collaboration and knowledge exchange in Malawi

**Mr Yesaya Nyirenda**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

Yesaya Zelenji Nyirenda is an Information Systems professional specializing in research data management, information governance, and collaborative research infrastructure. With a BSc (Hons) in Business Information Technology from the University of Greenwich, he serves as Data Systems Lead at KUHeS Research & Innovations Department, focusing on data-driven decision-making, project management, and M&E to enhance research efficiency and accountability. Yesaya's experience at Johns Hopkins Research Project, JHPIEGO, Dignitas International, Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Trust, and Baylor College of Medicine involves optimizing research ecosystems, ensuring regulatory compliance, and leveraging technology for impactful research. He champions secure, collaborative, and innovative research management.

**Introduction:** Effective Research Information Management (RIM) is essential for fostering collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and accountability in academic and research institutions. In Malawi, institutions such as Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS) generate vast amounts of research data, yet gaps in RIM frameworks often lead to inefficiencies in data governance, collaboration barriers, and compromised research quality.

This paper explores how structured RIM frameworks and best practices can strengthen collaboration among researchers, funding bodies, and policymakers while ensuring data integrity, auditability, and quality control. The discussion highlights the importance of data audits, data quality assessments, and structured repositories in improving research transparency.

### **Proposed Discussion**

- The current state of RIM frameworks in Malawi and how they compare to global best practices.
- The role of data audits and audit trails in ensuring research integrity and accountability.
- How standardized data quality assessments can improve research outputs and enhance knowledge exchange.
- Strategies for leveraging digital RIM systems to foster collaboration.
- The need for policy alignment with the Malawi Data Protection Act (2024) to strengthen research governance.

**Conclusion:** By developing and implementing robust RIM frameworks, research institutions in Malawi can improve knowledge-sharing, foster collaboration, and ensure compliance with data protection laws. This paper aims to spark discussions on how best to structure RIM systems for long-term sustainability and research impact.

## — Navigating the risks and ethical challenges of research innovation and technology transfer in Malawi

**Mr Yesaya Nyirenda**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

Yesaya Zelenji Nyirenda is an Information Systems professional specializing in research data management, information governance, and collaborative research infrastructure. Holding a BSc (Hons) in Business Information Technology from the University of Greenwich, he serves as Data Systems Lead at KUHeS Research & Innovations Department, enhancing research efficiency and accountability. With experience at Johns Hopkins, JHPIEGO, Dignitas International, Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Trust, and Baylor College of Medicine, Yesaya focuses on optimizing research ecosystems, ensuring regulatory compliance, and leveraging technology for impactful research. He is passionate about secure, collaborative, and innovative research management.

**Introduction:** As research institutions in Malawi integrate technology into research management and innovation, new risks and ethical concerns emerge. While digital transformation enhances efficiency and collaboration, it also introduces complexities in data privacy, security, governance, and oversight. Institutions like Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS) must address these risks while ensuring compliance with Good Clinical Practice (GCP) guidelines and data protection laws such as the Malawi Data Protection Act (2024), GDPR, and the UK Data Protection Act (2018).

This discussion explores risks in research technology adoption, particularly in data privacy, ethical research conduct, and the oversight of digital tools. We also examine cross-border data-sharing concerns in multi-institutional research collaborations.

### **Proposed Discussion:**

- Data privacy and security risks in research technology adoption.
- The impact of digital transformation on business processes, oversight, and research integrity.
- Balancing innovation with compliance—how institutions can implement secure and ethical research practices.
- The role of data-sharing agreements and alignment with international data protection regulations.
- Risks of over-reliance on automated systems, leading to ethical issues in informed consent.
- How institutions can integrate ethics and compliance training for researchers involved in technology-driven research.

**Conclusion:** As technology transforms research in Malawi, institutions must balance innovation with ethical oversight. Strengthening governance frameworks, human oversight, and regulatory compliance will ensure responsible research innovation and technology transfer. This discussion aims to explore strategies to address emerging risks and ensure ethical research.

## — Advancing University innovation through intellectual property and readiness level frameworks

### **Mr Letlotlo Phohole<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg | Braamfontein, South Africa

#### **Biography:**

Letlotlo Phohole is a distinguished leader in innovation management, currently serving as the Director of the Wits Innovation Centre (WIC). With a rich background spanning over 25 years in technology and innovation management across diverse sectors including academia, government, Industry and entrepreneurship, Letlotlo is at the forefront of promoting research-led and student-led innovation at Wits. His academic achievements are notable, holding a B.Tech(Elec Eng), an MSc in Technology and Innovation (Patent Intelligence), and currently pursuing management doctoral studies. His expertise in systems engineering and technology management has been pivotal in supporting startup development and applying systems thinking to complex problems

This presentation delves into the pivotal role of Intellectual Property (IP) management and Innovation Readiness Level (IRL) frameworks in cultivating a robust innovation ecosystem within academic institutions. As universities strive to enhance their research impact and commercialization capabilities, strategic management of IP and precise assessment of technology readiness levels emerge as critical factors.

We explore how effective IP frameworks not only protect valuable research outputs but also facilitate smoother transitions from idea generation to market implementation. Concurrently, the deployment of IRL frameworks provides a systematic approach to gauge the maturity of technologies, ensuring that they meet market requirements and are aligned with industry standards.

Aligning with SARIMA's 2025 theme of "Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Research & Development Ecosystem," this presentation examines case studies from leading universities that have successfully integrated these frameworks into their innovation strategies. These case studies highlight how IP and IRL frameworks have been instrumental in navigating the complexities of technology transfer, enhancing the economic and societal impacts of university-led innovations.

This session will provide actionable insights into the development and implementation of IP and IRL strategies, offering guidance to research managers and technology transfer officers on fostering an environment conducive to innovation and entrepreneurship. Attendees will learn about the challenges and benefits of these frameworks, and how they can be leveraged to foster a culture of innovation that aligns with both academic excellence and market viability.

## — Strengthening institutional support mechanisms to enhance early-career researchers' participation in consortium-driven funding applications

**Ms Lizél Senekal**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Lizél Senekal has more than 25 years of experience in the Higher Education sector. At the SA National Research Foundation she consulted on evaluation of large scale SA projects like the Future State of Physics and the White Paper on Science and Technology. She was also Editorial Manager at the South African Journal of Science.

Currently, she is Manager: Multi-National Grants at Stellenbosch University's Division for Research Development. She is responsible for international research funding applications in pre and post award phases, focusing on the EU Horizon Europe Programme.

Lizél has a MPhil Master's degree in Science Communication (cum laude).

International collaboration among universities, research institutions, and industry partners is essential for securing competitive research funding. However, early-career researchers face challenges in finding suitable research consortium partners when applying for consortium-driven funding opportunities like the EU Horizon Europe Framework Programme. This poster explores how collaboration strategies for an integrated research environment at universities can support emerging researchers in finding suitable consortium partners. It will draw from an analysis of collaboration models at EU universities to propose strategic approaches for fostering effective long term international partnerships.

By leveraging integrated institutional mechanisms that span the research office and the international office, structured governance practices can develop practical solutions to enhance international collaboration in funding applications. Attention is also paid to best practices for early-career researchers to build impactful, sustainable partnerships to secure research funding, and in a broader context, contribute to increasing institutional international funding streams.

## — Anticipating the unforeseen: Ethical challenges in balancing research protocols and progress reports

**Dr Tukiso Sewapa<sup>1</sup>, Mr Siyanda Mangele<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Limpopo, Polokwane, South Africa, <sup>2</sup>University of Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Dr Tukiso Sewapa is a Research Ethics Officer at the University of Limpopo, Research Administration and Development. She manages the administrative review and report on research ethics application processes for both Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) and Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC). Amongst others, it is her key responsibility to ensure that approved studies are monitored and continues to comply with National Health Research Ethics Council requirements. She holds PhD in Psychology, and her research interest lies in ethics and Afrocentricity. Dr Sewapa is a member of Southern African Research & Innovation Management Association (SARIMA).

In the realm of research, a research proposal or protocol functions as a guiding framework, detailing the study's objectives, methodologies, and expected outcomes. Whereas, a research progress report evaluates the results of the study after it has been conducted. The proposal emphasizes ethical considerations, which primarily revolve around the anticipated integrity of the research design, safeguarding participant welfare, and ensuring that methodologies conform to established ethical standards. However, the assumptions inherent in a research proposal often overlook unforeseen challenges that may emerge during the actual execution of the study. As the research progresses, the report sheds light on the actual outcomes, frequently exposing unexpected ethical dilemmas. These ethical dilemmas may encompass issues such as data manipulation, participant consent, and the management of sensitive information. Research ethical dilemmas can have significant implications for research managers, both in terms of their professional responsibilities and the broader impact on the research environment. The dilemmas often involve complex decisions that require balancing ethical principles, institutional policies, legal requirements, and the interests of various stakeholders. This paper will delve into the critical role of research managers to ensure that research activities are conducted with integrity, transparency, and accountability as overseers of proper planning, execution, and documentation of research projects. It will further argue that flexibility is essential in navigating ethical concerns, allowing researchers to respond to unforeseen developments without compromising their adherence to ethical guidelines. By examining the dynamic interplay between research proposals and progress reports, this discussion will highlight the necessity for researchers to be prepared for the complexities of real-world research environments while remaining committed to ethical integrity. This paper has implications for research managers in fostering ethical standards across the research processes.

## — Research ethics and unexpected challenges: The roles of research managers and administrators.

**Mr Seedy Sey**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MRCG at LSHTM, Banjul, Gambia

### **Biography:**

Seedy Sey has more than seventeen years work experience in The Gambia public service. Currently, he serves as a Project Manager at the Medical Research Council Gambia (MRCG) at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). He is committed to public service excellence, access to finance, research development and management, and community development advancement. His research interests are development financing, microfinance and community development.

**Background:** Research managers and administrators play a critical role in ensuring the ethical conduct of research, acting as a bridge between researchers, regulatory requirements, and institutional policies. With the growing complexity of research landscape characterized by interdisciplinary collaborations, global partnerships, and rapid technological advancements, their involvement has become essential in navigating ethical concerns and challenges. Generally, this role has shifted from providing administrative support to adopting a more proactive approach to ensuring compliance with ethical standards, safeguarding human subjects and promoting responsible research practices.

### **Rationale:**

Investigating the role of research managers and administrators in tackling research ethics and unforeseen challenges stems from their unique position within research institutions. Research managers and administrators are vital in ensuring ethical oversight, offering guidance, and establishing best practices to reduce risks.

### **Design:**

Drawing upon interdisciplinary literature and case studies, this work analyses the prevalence of ethical challenges encountered in research settings qualitative insights into the strategies managers employ to address these challenges, emphasising themes such as training, policy development and communication regarding ethical issues.

### **Evaluation:**

An evaluation of the findings indicates that while research managers face numerous challenges, including limited resources and differing levels of researcher awareness about ethics, they play a crucial role in fostering a culture of ethical compliance. Formulating successful strategies such as creating customized training programs, encouraging open communication with researchers, and establishing clear policies that address emerging ethical issues. However, challenges persist, such as adapting to rapid technological advancements and ensuring ethical guidelines remain relevant and practically effective.

### **Conclusion:**

Research managers and administrators play a vital role in navigating the complexities of research ethics. Their proactive involvement in addressing unexpected challenges can greatly enhance ethical standards within research practices. By nurturing collaborative environment that prioritizes research ethics, institutions can ensure that research integrity is upheld, ultimately benefiting society.

## — Strengthening University-Industry-Government collaboration in South Africa's innovation ecosystem

### **Mr Ntiyiso Shabangu<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>North-West University - Noordbrug, Potchefstroom, Potchefstroom, South Africa

#### **Biography:**

Ntiyiso Shabangu is a Senior Commercialisation Specialist at North-West University (NWU), where he facilitates the commercialization of research outputs and fosters industry partnerships. With a background in mining engineering from Wits University and ongoing LLB studies at UNISA, he brings a multidisciplinary approach to innovation management, intellectual property strategy and commercialisation. Before NWU, Ntiyiso worked as a Patent Examiner at CIPC, gaining expertise in intellectual property protection and the legal aspects of technology transfer. He is actively involved in research commercialization networks, including SARIMA and AUTM, and is dedicated to strengthening South Africa's global competitiveness.

South Africa's innovation ecosystem remains constrained by a government-dominated Supportive Model, where the state primarily funds research while industry plays a limited role. While this model has driven public-sector research, it has hindered commercialization, slowed technology transfer, and resulted in low private-sector R&D investment. As South Africa seeks to enhance its global competitiveness, transitioning to a Triple Helix Model where universities, industry, and government collaborate as equal partners is essential

This presentation will examine the structural and strategic barriers limiting university-industry-government (UIG) collaboration, including restrictive funding structures that prioritize traditional academic research over applied innovation, weak industry-university linkages, and rigid academic incentives. Recent research highlights that most South African academics have never engaged in industry partnerships, limiting knowledge transfer and the commercialization of research. This lack of collaboration weakens innovation-driven economic growth and contributes to a mismatch between research outputs and industry needs

The presentation aligns with SARIMA's focus on Collaborative Innovation & Technology Transfer by offering practical, action-oriented strategies for Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) and research management professionals to foster effective UIG partnerships.

#### **Participants will gain:**

- Actionable strategies for strengthening collaboration, including sector-specific partnerships, joint research clusters, and structured industry engagement programs.
- Best practices for TTOs to advocate for industry-led R&D incentives, commercialization-friendly funding models, and revised academic performance metrics.
- Insights on integrating civil society in a Quadruple Helix Model, ensuring research addresses societal challenges and fosters inclusive innovation.

A shift from the Supportive Model to a dynamic Triple Helix ecosystem is no longer optional, it is a necessity. By implementing these strategies, South Africa's TTOs and research managers can drive impactful collaborations, unlocking the country's full innovation potential.



## — The cost of REC membership: Anticipating and addressing REC member burnout in higher education institutions

**Ms Simangele Shezi<sup>1</sup>, Mr Siyanda Mangele<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, South Africa, <sup>2</sup>University of Zululand, Richards Bay, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Simangele is the Research Ethics Manager at Nelson Mandela University. She started her career at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) as an intern in the Research Office. She advanced to Senior Administrative Officer, overseeing staff, training, ethics application reviews, and REC administration. Passionate about research ethics, Simangele believes it should be central to research culture. She is well-versed in national and international research ethics legislation. An active member of SARIMA and REASA, she is also pursuing a PhD at UKZN, focusing on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on households.

In the ever-evolving landscape of research ethics, Research Ethics Committees (RECs) are tasked with the critical responsibility of ensuring that research is conducted ethically, protecting participants, maintaining the integrity of the research process, and adhering to legal and institutional guidelines. However, in many higher education institutions, REC members are often academics already burdened by significant workloads. As they navigate their many roles that include, teaching, research community work and supervision. These demands of REC membership can lead to unexpected fatigue, burnout and possible resignation of members.

This abstract will delve into the phenomenon of REC member burnout, examining its underlying causes and the unforeseen consequences it brings to institutions. Factors such as increasing regulatory requirements, the complexity of ethical dilemmas, and the emotional toll of safeguarding participant welfare contribute to this fatigue. As these pressures mount, the stability and effectiveness of RECs can be compromised, impacting membership quality, prolonging turnaround times, and ultimately affecting the ethics review process.

By identifying these contributing factors, we aim to illuminate the hidden costs associated with REC membership and the implications for higher education institutions. We will propose actionable strategies to mitigate REC member burnout, including workload management techniques, enhanced support systems, and fostering a culture of well-being among committee members.

In alignment with the conference theme, "Expect the Unexpected," this study encourages institutions to recognize and address the unseen challenges faced by REC members. By proactively anticipating these issues, we can create a more sustainable ethical review environment that ensures high-quality oversight while supporting the well-being of those responsible for upholding research integrity.

## — My internship journey into the world of research administration for support staff

### **Ms Reconcile Sibuyi<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

#### **Biography:**

Ms. Reconcile Sibuyi completed her Bachelor of Laws (LLB) in 2022 at the University of South Africa (UNISA). She applied for an internship programme at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) offered by the Department of Science and Innovation during the former part of 2023.

She joined UNISA as her host institution for the duration of her internship in the latter part of 2023 and was placed at the Professional Research Group under the Research Support Directorate where she has assisted with, amongst other things, report writing, document preparation, screening applications, event planning, and completed training programmes in research administration.

As a Research Administrative Intern at the Professional Research Group/Committee (PRG/C), a unit within an Open Distance Learning Institution's Research and Innovation department. It fosters a research culture and creates opportunities for specialists and support professional employees engaged in formal research to produce research outputs by offering them support through funding and training.

My role has provided me with a valuable opportunity to immerse myself in the intricacies of research administration, such as Research Ethics application screening and Research Outputs capturing, gaining hands-on experience in a dynamic and fast-paced environment, especially in the PRG. Throughout my internship, I contributed to various administrative tasks, participated in critical meetings, and attended workshops to enhance my knowledge and skills, such as organizing meetings, event planning and preparing documentation such as Standard Operating Procedures, Progress Reports, Program Plans and Closeout Reports.

Through a self-reflexive methodology, I explored my experience with mentorship, access to learning resources, organizational culture, and the relationships that have shaped my professional development. I used a self-reflective matrix to assess my tasks, results, and lived experiences. This qualitative approach enabled me to address key questions through individual interviews and reflective diaries:

- How have the learning experiences during the internship contributed to my career development?
- What role has the organizational culture played in shaping my internship role?
- In what ways has mentorship from colleagues and supervisors impacted my sense of belonging and growth as an intern?

This study aims to share insights from my internship experience, including strategies for improving research administration practices, enhancing team collaboration, and navigating the complexities of research funding and regulatory compliance complexities. This presentation will provide attendees with practical takeaways and contribute to the broader conversation on optimizing administrative support in research environments.

## — GFGP process for international funding: Challenges and perspectives – The case of Zambeze University (Mozambique)

**Dr Domingos Simbe<sup>1</sup>, Mr Iquibal Aliasse<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Zambeze University, Mozambique

The Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) process for higher education institutions represents an essential step in ensuring trust, credibility and institutional quality, especially in contexts of internationalization and access to international research funding. In the case of Zambeze University, GFGP plays a strategic role in enabling the institution to align itself with international standards, which can open doors to external funding and global partnerships.

This analysis is relevant because, when seeking institutional validation, universities face numerous challenges — from bureaucratic and technical requirements to structural and resource limitations. At the same time, this process generates expectations regarding to improvement of the quality of teaching, research and institutional management. Often, the need to achievement requires institutions to reinvent themselves and adopting new practices.

This study aims to examine the main obstacles and opportunities associated with the GFGP process in the Mozambican context, focusing on the experience of Zambeze University. The research seeks to contribute to a broader reflection on the implications of this process for institutional strengthening.

The study adopts a qualitative methodology, focusing on understanding the GFGP process, it seeks to evaluate the steps involved, as well as to explain the relationships and causes of the phenomena observed. It is an action research, in which researchers play an active role in identifying and solving problems, proposing transformative solutions to the challenges identified.

To carry out the research, relevant bibliographical materials is analysed, with in-depth investigation of a specific case, aiming to understand its particularities and complexities.

The research shows that, in contexts of validation for access to international funding, institutions immerse themselves in unknown environments, which leads them, in part, to evaluate new procedures and question their practices. It is necessary to ensure that research practices are integrated into the institutional strategy, contributing to innovation, continuous improvement and evidence-based decision-making. In addition, an organizational culture that values learning, critical reflection and adaptation to external and internal demands must be fostered.

It is concluded that, in the GFGP process, there are a series of procedures that, at first glance, may seem difficult, but are not impossible to comply with. When implemented, these procedures can add value to higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** Grant; Challenges, Perspectives

## — Reviving research culture from the brink: Insights from the Inaugural MUBAS internal grant initiative

**Mr George Sinjani**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mubas, Blantyre, Malawi

### **Biography:**

George Sinjani is a seasoned Research and Development Manager with over a decade of experience in Clinical Trials Management, research management, strategic planning, project evaluation, and consultancy. He holds an MSc in Clinical Trials Management. As a Research Support Officer at MUBAS, he provides technical and strategic support, overseeing research grants, ensuring compliance, and managing funded projects. George excels in facilitating high-quality research outcomes, coordinating research administration, and developing standard procedures. His expertise ensures impactful and efficient project execution, while he also manages the RSU's research database and promotes funding opportunities. His leadership fosters collaboration and research excellence at MUBAS.

As a young and dynamic institution, the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) is dedicated to development a strong research culture that advances innovation and societal development. MUBAS was established in 2019. The University, formally The Malawi Polytechnic a college under University of Malawi (UNIMA), has been in existence since 1965. In 2024, the MUBAS Research Support Unit (RSU) within Research and Innovation Department launched its first-ever internal research grant to promote collaborative, high-impact research while supporting early and mid-career researchers through mentorship and capacity-building. With a substantial allocation of MK450 million (US\$260,000) for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the initiative provides up to MK50 million ((US\$28,000) per research proposal over a three-year period, aligning with both national and global development priorities.

The inaugural call attracted significant interest, with 22 research proposals submitted by MUBAS research groups. A rigorous review process evaluated submissions based on relevance to national and institutional priorities, quality of research proposal and methodological clarity, impact and sustainability, team composition and collaboration, budget justification, adherence to guidelines, ethical considerations, and alignment with the SDGs. The review panel recommended one proposal for unconditional funding, seven for conditional revision and resubmission, while fourteen were ultimately not approved. This process identified key strengths and areas for improvement, offering valuable insights for future calls.

This presentation will outline the implementation of the grant program, findings from the review process, and lessons learned from this pioneering initiative. Additionally, it will discuss strategies for sustaining research funding and strengthening institutional research capacity. The MUBAS RSU's efforts serve as a model for emerging research institutions aiming to build a vibrant and sustainable research ecosystem. By refining its approach and fostering continuous improvement, MUBAS aims to enhance research quality, drive innovation, and contribute meaningfully to societal progress.

## — Utilising research output data for effective monitoring and evaluating of research entities at SA Universities

**Ms Teresa Smit**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Teresa Smit (BA, BA (Hons) (PU for CHE), MA (NWU)) is a Research Support Coordinator in the Directorate of Research and Postgraduate Support at the North-West University, with more than 15 years of experience in research administration. In her current position she focuses on research output information management. She is also a member of the Research Output, Outcomes & Impact Community of Practice (CoP-ROOI).

As South African universities strive to maintain their competitiveness and relevance in the national and global research landscape, there is a growing emphasis on using data-driven strategies to monitor and evaluate the performance of research entities. This poster explores how a South African university can leverage research output data to track the progress, assess the quality, and evaluate the effectiveness of its research entities.

This data-driven approach allows for a detailed assessment of each entity's academic progress, including their research productivity, publication output, and the impact of their work within the academic community. Through analysis, the university can track trends in research entity performance, providing critical insights into both high-performing entities and those that may require additional resources or support.

In addition to tracking progress, research output data plays a key role in evaluating the quality of research within each entity. By utilizing advanced data analytics tools, metrics such as citation impact, funding success, collaboration networks, and innovation outputs can help to identify areas of excellence as well as potential gaps or opportunities for further development.

This poster highlights the critical role that research output data plays in the monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement of research entities at a South African university. By using data-driven insights, the university is able to enhance its research strategies, drive performance, and ensure that its research entities remain competitive, innovative, and aligned with both academic and institutional goals.

## — Embracing a robust project management approach to strengthen research management at MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda

**Mr Renny Ssembatya**<sup>1</sup>, Ms Njilan Johnson, Mr Jonathan Nkata, Mr Arnold Mindra

<sup>1</sup>Medical Research Council - Uganda/ London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Entebbe, Uganda

### **Biography:**

I am a public health specialist with training in project monitoring and evaluation. I have accumulated over 10 years' experience working in the health sector in Uganda particular in Sexual-Reproductive Maternal Newborn Adolescent and Child Health. This experience has equipped with skills in Project management, research and data management.

I have additionally had the opportunity to collaborate on a number of evaluation studies with UNFPA partners across Uganda.

**Background:** In many sub-Saharan Africa countries (SSA), project management (PM) as an aspect in Research management has not been fully adopted due to the perception of complexity and the inexperience of scientists. PM approaches have additionally been considered too robust with limited application in medical research. This has often led to inefficiencies in monitoring and reporting, timelines and unmet research milestones and at times strained relationships with funding institutions. Project management is however intended to provide direction and control to projects through comprehensive planning, management and leadership. This abstract highlights how scientists/Researchers at large research units like the Medical Research Council (MRC) - Uganda at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) can benefit from integrating comprehensive project management into research studies.

**Methods:** In 2024, the Research Support Office (RSO) at MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda began a pilot to integrate robust project management into research management to ensure that scientists and researchers devote significant time to 'science' rather than spend significant time on routine project tasks. The approach has been gradually introduced into the Non Communicable Diseases (NCD) theme, with easy to use tools such as Gantt charts, Logical frameworks, Risk assessment matrices, work break down structures, IT and regular debriefs with key stakeholders.

**Results:** We have been able to assess the effectiveness of our pilot project through surveying researchers of the NCD theme, who were part of the initiative. The main highlights from the survey results were improved efficiency in workflow processes attributed to adopted tools and systems, better budget monitoring and reporting, adherence to workplans and stakeholder engagement.

**Conclusion:** PM has the potential to improve efficiency in research execution through timely risk identification and mitigation, stakeholder engagement and feedback. The Unit continues to monitor and evaluate the current pilot for improvement and potential rollout to the entire Unit.

## — Research grant managers as catalysts for change: Rethinking global collaboration

**Ms Thato Tantsi**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nelson Mandela University, South Africa, Gqeberha, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Thato Tantsi is the Senior Research Manager: External Grants at Nelson Mandela University, overseeing pre- and post-award research funding. She plays a key role in grant and contract management, proposal writing support, review and submissions, research compliance and risk management. She supports proposal writing, reviews, and submissions. She has extensive experience in research management, finance, fundraising, contract negotiations, and governance. She is an avid systems builder focusing on strategic partnerships for good governance. She holds an MBA from Rhodes Business School focusing on sustainable business models for social impact. She is passionate about research for social good.

Collaboration in research management is undergoing a profound transformation, demanding new approaches to partnerships and networks. This presentation explores the transformative potential of equitable collaboration and robust networks in research management, particularly between the global north and south. By fostering inclusive partnerships, we can bridge gaps, share knowledge, and co-create solutions that address global challenges.

Traditional research partnerships often perpetuate imbalances in power, funding, and knowledge exchange. By embedding principles of equity, trust, and mutual benefit, research managers can redefine collaboration, shifting from transactional interactions to meaningful, long-term engagements.

The role of Communities of Practice (CoPs) will be highlighted as a mechanism to build capacity, facilitate knowledge co-creation, and strengthen global research networks.

Research Grant Managers play a pivotal role in this transformation, as they connect researchers, funders, and institutions, ensuring that collaborations are not only established but also thrive. The strategic contributions of Research Grant Managers lie in supporting individual researchers and advancing institutional research agendas through implementing tailored support mechanisms such as proposal development and writing support, grant match making, developing and fostering interdisciplinary cooperation, which can maximize research impact and success in securing funding.

Examples of innovative approaches to collaboration, such as leveraging new technologies and methodologies, will be discussed to inspire attendees to rethink traditional networks. Through case studies and real-world examples, this presentation will demonstrate the impact of effective collaboration on advancing the global research agenda and achieving sustainable development goals. Research Grant Managers will be equipped with hands-on strategies to foster inclusive, equitable and effective networks, with the aim of enhancing their impact and contributing to a more equitable and connected research ecosystem.

## — Recognizing research management within institutions in Central Africa: The case of Cameroon

**Ms Octavia Tedjo**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MDRG, University of Yaoundé 1, Yaoundé, Cameroon

### **Biography:**

Octavia is a dynamic project manager with 8 years of experience in healthcare project management. Currently working at MDRG and ISHReCA in Cameroon, she oversees large-scale projects, ensuring team coordination and budget management, while respecting deadlines. Passionate about process optimization and problem solving, she is an expert in Agile, Scrum and Waterfall methodologies. With four complementary Masters in Health Sciences and Project Analysis and Evaluation, several certifications in project management, she puts her skills at the service of CARIMA to succeed in strategic projects.

**Background:** Research management is essential for fostering innovation and scientific advancement in Central Africa, but in Cameroon, the lack of structured research systems limits research's potential impact on national development. Effective research management ensures projects are well-funded, organized, and aligned with national goals.

**Method:** To evaluate the state of research management in Cameroon, a combination of qualitative methods was used, including a literature review, interviews with stakeholders (university researchers, administrators, and project managers), and an assessment of research governance frameworks. Workshops and training sessions were conducted to engage institutional leaders and offer tools for improving research project management.

**Results:** The study identified significant challenges, including inadequate funding, lack of research manager training, and weak collaboration between research institutions and government. However, it also revealed positive trends, such as growing awareness of the need for structured research management and emerging partnerships with international organizations. Leaders responded positively to capacity-building efforts, indicating a readiness for change.

**Conclusion:** Enhancing research management in Cameroon and Central Africa is crucial to unlocking the full potential of research for national development. The findings highlight the need for investment in capacity building, improved institutional frameworks, and stronger collaboration among research entities to ensure effective project management and impactful research outcomes.



## — Research and innovation management in the context of public Universities in Mozambique: Challenges and perspectives

**Dr Eurides Tendaunga**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Patrícia Cuamba<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Zambeze University, Beira, Moçambique, <sup>2</sup>Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, Moçambique

### **Biography:**

Eurides Felisberto Tendaunga, business manager, historian and science educator, university lecturer with 16 years of teaching experience. She has a PhD in History of History and Scientific Education, Administration and Business Management. Currently has been involved in the management of postgraduate courses, development of scientific work/projects and has taken part in various working committees at Zambezi University. For four years was a member of the University Council and coordinated Mandarin Department at Zambezi University. During his career developed some scientific research work, with participation and publications at national and international scientific events.

The importance of knowledge as an essential resource for organisations has been widely highlighted and is considered fundamental to achieving excellence in results, as well as being a driver of innovation and competitiveness (Dayan; Evans, 2006; Beesley; Cooper, 2008). Research, as one of the pillars of action of higher education institutions, aims to produce knowledge for the development of a nation. In this context, it is essential that these institutions implement research policies that guide the production of knowledge and the development of innovation capacity, generating solutions that contribute to the country's development. The aim of this empirical study is to analyse the project management policies adopted by public universities in Mozambique, considering them a strategic place for producing knowledge and fostering innovation. To achieve this objective, a qualitative study will be carried out, based on a literature review; documentary research, with a view to identifying and mapping the various regulatory initiatives for project management at public universities in Mozambique, identifying the success and failure factors in the search for resources for projects, describing the universities' project management structure, measuring the capacity of the project management units in comparison to the levels of investment they achieve annually, and mapping the networks of partners and inter-institutional cooperation for the promotion of opportunities and project management at the universities; and interviews with those responsible for scientific activities at the universities. The study is based on the premise that the implementation of effective research project management policies boosts innovation capacities and the generation of knowledge, which are essential for the development of nations, since it contributes to creating an environment favourable to the development of new ideas and solutions to the problems that affect nations.

**Keywords:** Management; Research; Innovation; Public universities; Mozambique.

## — Navigating the intersection of industry standards and Animal Welfare in South African animal research

**Mrs Biosha Thompson Graham**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

### **Biography:**

I have degrees in Ecology, Biotechnology, and Microbiology and currently serve as the Research Ethics: Admin Officer for Animal Care and USe, Biosafety, and Permit Compliance. I have recently been recognized with the Research Administration Professional award by the IPRC, and am dedicated to ensuring ethical standards and safety in research practices. My passion for biology drives a deep commitment to advancing understanding in animal research and biosafety and an extensive academic background and professional experience underscore a profound dedication to the field of biological research.

A significant challenge arises when industry funders request research specifications that conflict with South Africa's national legislation governing animal research at institutions, often prioritizing their own interests. This misalignment creates a contentious environment for researchers who attempt to balance national and international standards for animal research, including the principles of the Four Rs (Replacement, Reduction, Refinement, and Responsibility) and the Five Freedoms of animal welfare, and industry requests to secure and maintain funding. Such conflicts pose unexpected challenges which undermine research ethics and animal welfare in scientific pursuits.

As such, this project will investigate the research and animal welfare related ethics considerations for conducting animal agricultural research in South Africa, specifically exploring the interplay between poultry and porcine industry standards and the South African National Standard for the Care and Use of Animals in Scientific Research (SANS 10386:2021). We will examine key provisions within industry and national research standards relevant to animal welfare, including housing, nutrition, and husbandry practices. A comparative analysis will be conducted to identify points of convergence and divergence between these industry standards and the requirements outlined in SANS10386:2021. Furthermore, we will address the ethics obligations of researchers, particularly those conducting industry-funded research. Research ethics managers and Animal Research Ethics Committees (ARECs) play a critical role in guiding researchers to navigate these research requirements. Thus, by addressing industry demands and national standards, such as SANS 10386:2021, research managers can support ethical and responsible scientific advancement, without compromising the foundational principles of research ethics and animal welfare.

## — Approaches for overcoming challenges and upholding ethical integrity in establishing an Inter-Faculty REC

**Ms Lisa Marie Williams**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Cape Town (UCT), Cape Town, South Africa

### **Biography:**

Lisa Marie Williams is a Senior Administrative Officer in Research Integrity at the University of Cape Town (UCT). She plays a key role in supporting ethical governance and responsible conduct of research, ensuring compliance with institutional and regulatory standards.

Research involving human participants requires diligent ethical oversight to ensure compliance with institutional, national, and international standards. To strengthen the oversight of research ethics and promote thorough governance, the University of Cape Town (UCT) established the Inter-Faculty Human Research Ethics Committee (IFHREC). This committee reviews health research outside the Faculty of Health Sciences requiring National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) approval, inter-, trans-, and multi-disciplinary research, and assesses studies where a Faculty REC determines that IFHREC review is required. Despite efforts to strengthen research integrity, unanticipated challenges continue to test ethical frameworks.

One challenge that emerged during the establishment and registration of the IFHREC was confronting the need for cultural sensitivity, ensuring inclusivity and respect for diverse academic, disciplinary, and ethical perspectives beyond the more common traditional biomedical approach. Balancing these differences while maintaining a cohesive and robust review process requires clear guidelines aligned with (occasionally conflicting) national and institutional ethics standards. Effective interdisciplinary collaboration involves managing varying expectations, methodologies, and practices across diverse faculties. Open communication—through regular meetings, workshops, and discussions—helps bridge gaps and foster mutual understanding. Given the potentially conflicting approaches of traditional biomedical research ethics with cultural, social, and disciplinary norms, acknowledging diverse ethical perspectives and promoting inclusivity within the REC ensures that cultural and contextual nuances are properly ventilated.

In this poster I will trace the journey that UCT's IFHREC undertook as it sought institutional approval and NHREC registration. I will consider some challenges faced and the approaches we used to address these challenges. I will also highlight some successes and reflect on the journey from conception to a fully functioning committee. This always requires vigilance, adaptability, and proactivity in addressing challenges, and balancing ethical responsibilities with practical constraints while continuously improving research ethics oversight.