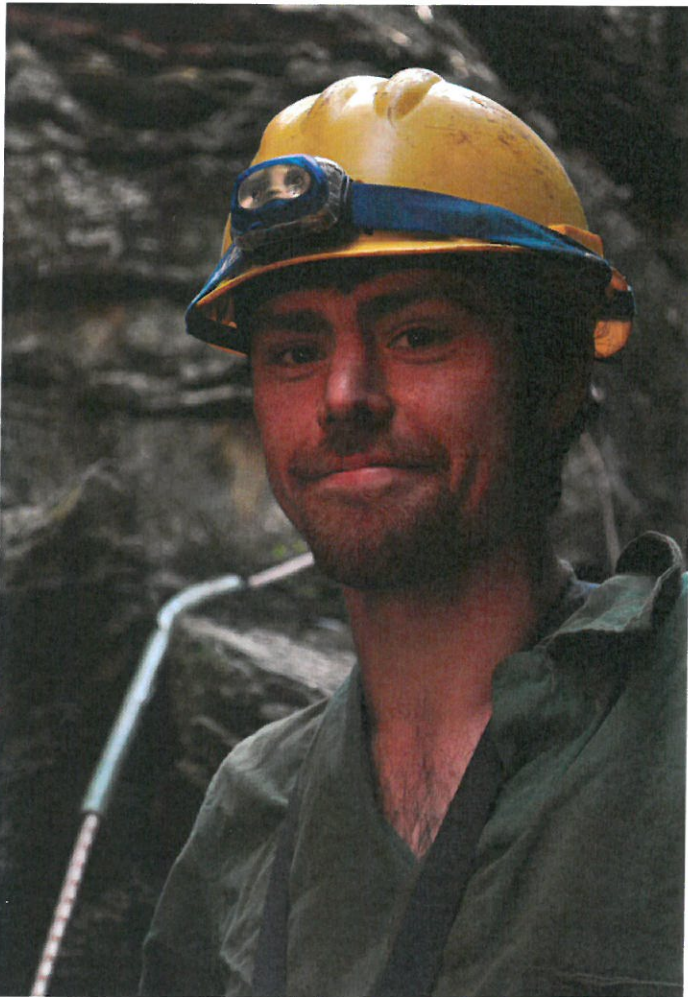


CURIOSER AND CURIOSER

ARE THERE LIMITS AS TO WHAT CURIOSITY CAN DO?
IS THERE A LIMIT TO LEVELS OF CURIOSITY? OPINIONS SEEM TO BE DIVIDED.
TOO MUCH, I AM TOLD, CAN BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. I GUESS A LOT DEPENDS ON THE INDIVIDUAL
PSYCHE AND WHAT DRIVES THEM. IN THE CASE OF STEVEN TUCKER, A 25-YEAR-OLD TRAINEE
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT, CURIOSITY DRIVES HIM



“In general I am driven by a curiosity to know what is around the corner, what is at the end of a road, what is over that next hill. This has led me to do hiking, bicycle touring, kayaking and of course cave exploration. When I am not exploring I love reading books about other explorers with cricket in the background.

“I am 25. I have completed my articles at a small firm, Johan Zwarts & Associates, and I am still working there. I am currently waiting for the results to the Professional Practices Examination (PPE) and then hopefully I will be a qualified CA(SA).”

Tucker was born in Pretoria and he drew inspiration from his father who is an accountant and his mother who is a medical doctor. His mother fostered in Steven a wide range of interests. For example, she is a member of the South Africa Archaeological Society as well as the Astronomical Society of South Africa.

The entire family is on “permanent holiday,” according to Tucker. They travel nationally and his father instilled in him a love for the great outdoors. Camping, fishing and adventure trips formed a part of the ethos of the Tucker family.

While he was at school, Tucker tried most codes of sport – no doubt because adventure was a part of his psyche by now. He participated in athletics, chess, hockey, karate, swimming and cricket.

Tucker obliterates the stereotype that chartered accountants are dull old men with a penchant for grey suits and an obsession with numbers. He is also an avid cave explorer and his partner of seven years, Irene Krüger, also a potential chartered accountant, shares his passion and enthusiasm. Krüger completed her articles at PwC and is awaiting her registration as a CA(SA).

For Tucker the road toward his CA(SA) designation has by no means been an easy one.

"I attended Hoërskool Die Wilgers. Towards the end of my second year of studies at the University of Pretoria (UP) I started my articles. Even though I was a full-time employee, I continued to do my third year of accounting at UP. I passed the year, but my accounting marks weren't good enough to get into Honours, so I had to redo one subject in 2010.

"Then 2011 was probably the most challenging year for me as I did my Honours through Unisa whilst working on a full-time basis. During that year two of the six people doing audits at our firm went on maternity leave and I found myself extremely busy at work as well as being in a more senior position. But the year went well and I passed my Honours. In 2012 I passed the Qualifying Examination (QE1) and completed my articles, but I failed to pass the PPE," he explained.

It is clear that Tucker has been 'wired' to become a chartered accountant and this youngster has the drive to succeed in this high-performance environment.

"I always had an interest in businesses and wanted to know more about the inner workings of them, especially the finances side," says Tucker.

In a fast-paced world and with the effort involved in surfing the information highway, the new 'pressure valve' is striking a harmonious work-life balance. Some may argue that this mechanism is a means to preserve one's sanity or to strive to life a full life where work life does not succeed in consuming one. Tucker is no different when it comes to achieving this ideal.

"One of the challenges in this field of work is that it conflicts greatly with my other interests. Balancing work, studies and my many interests has always been a challenge. I have had to prioritise my interests and accept that I cannot do it all right now. For the past three years my focus has been caving. In terms of studies, the best thing is to keep up to date with studies."

Of course, an energetic 25-year-old with virtually never diminishing energy levels seems to be almost synonymous with

the Duracell bunny – almost like someone who has had an eternal Red Bull infusion, without actually consuming the product! One might ask, "Is this sustainable?" I have come to the conclusion that such passion is not dictated by age but by individuals' quest to define themselves. I am sure that twenty years hence, Tucker would not have deviated from the image of the 25-year-old that he is today: both the individual and the alter ego developing and entrenching themselves with the passing of time! How did this youngster defy the chartered accountant stereotype (if it still exists today) and venture from the bright fluorescent lights in an office poring over mystical numbers to the gloom of the cave to 'sniff out relics of the past?

Tucker explains: "About three-and-a-half years ago Irene and I heard about a trip to Wonderfontein Cave with the Speleological Exploration Club (SEC). The cave has massive passages half filled with water and it's a beautiful swim through them. The next trip was to Boons Cave, a leisurely stroll through large passages. The third trip was to Nico's II cave.

"Since then I have done close to 150 trips to about 50 different caves, which included some caves that had never been explored before and some never before seen extensions to previously explored caves.

"During 2013 Pedro Boshoff had been tasked by Lee Berger to find new hominid sites. Pedro Boshoff is a member of the SEC and Lee Berger is Head of Paleoanthropology at Wits University. Realising how much work it would be to look for fossils in the hundreds of caves that we know of, Pedro asked myself and Rick Hunter to help him with this.

"Then, at the start of September, a group of cavers including myself went to the Rising Star cave system, which has always been one of my favourites. We were excited when we found a blowing hole! This could potentially lead to a new section of the cave. At the top I accidentally found a crack in the floor. A few metres away from where we landed we found an old bone in the floor. There was another, and soon after we saw a tooth and then a mandible with a few teeth in it. After telling Pedro about our find we went back on the 24th of September and took photos of the fossils. On the 1st of October we showed the photos to Pedro and then to Lee Berger and he was speechless.

"Scientists were called in from across the world to work on the project. More fossils were found and we obtained more than a thousand specimens, which makes this the richest hominid site ever found in southern Africa. My mother was

more excited than I was and so was Irene. Thankfully, my firm also supported my caving and other adventure activities."

There can be no doubt the fulfilment that Tucker must have felt after this ground-breaking find. In an area where literally history is being unearthed frequently, Tucker is proud to have contributed significantly.

When this youngster finds the time, he wants to also do more kayaking. At the moment another passion is biking. He and Irene have cycled in North-West Province over a ten-day period and covered approximately 600 km, cycling from Pretoria to Groot Marico and back in December 2011. In December 2012 they cycled from Pretoria to Mokopane and then on to Tzaneen and down to Nelspruit and back to Pretoria over a 24-day period, covering a distance of approximately 1 200 km.

It may seem as though Tucker is an archaeologist, but it is clear that he is a chartered accountant who has great ambitions.

"I have been working at this firm for the past five years. As it is a small firm, official titles are not used often to identify jobs, but I would guess my position could be defined as an assistant audit manager.

"I work in small teams and with the same people every day. Everyone has a different personality type and different skills. I contribute technical knowledge of both accounting and taxation.

"I will most likely move out of auditing and will hopefully be more involved in financial management, or more specifically project management. Of course, in my mind there are many more adventures and discoveries I would like to make, and hopefully I will have the time to do those," he says.

Tucker is also encouraging and imploring young people to work hard and to follow this career path:

"Make sure you are going into this career for the right reasons. If you don't have a good enough reason for wanting to be a CA(SA) it will be the worst time of your life and you will end up wishing your life away.

"If this is the career for you, persevere through the hard times, there will be many. Keep focused on why you are doing this and always follow your curiosity and passions," he says.

The message is unequivocal in conveying to young people that in order to cope with the demands of a challenging profession, one needs an outlet and to pursue it with passion. In so doing, your life will be far more fulfilling and rewarding. □

In Support of Sound Accounting Practices

The fascinating story of South Africa's first deaf Chartered Accountant. She refused to let her deafness get in the way of her dreams, ambitions and philosophies.

The main tenet behind Yann Martel's bestseller, *Life of Pi*, is that one needs adversity in order to enable one to survive. Readers were in awe of how the narrator, young Piscine Molitor Patel, found himself stranded on a boat after a violent storm saw all passengers and crew dead, including his brother and parents.

He also had a zebra, a hyena, an Orangutan and a Bengal tiger for company. Whilst journeying to nowhere, his attention was focused on a weird duality: that of surviving on a seemingly merciless ocean and to also avoid the carnivorous instinct of the majestic tiger when he happened to be the sole survivor. Piscine is adamant that had it not been for the tiger, he would not have survived.

A fascinating parallel to Piscine and his life changing experience is reflected in the likes of Kashveera Chanderjith, South Africa's first deaf Chartered Accountant. Like Piscine, Kashveera refused to let her deafness get in the way of her dreams, ambitions and philosophies. She refused to allow her "disability" to destroy her; instead, her apparent "shortcoming" actually defines her!

The tenacity of this youngster grew from a young and tender age and she learnt to be resilient and to not let the odd insult, malicious teasing and the blatant door slamming deter her. Paradoxically, it made her more resolute and went a long way to systematically constructing a self-esteem so tough that it makes titanium seem like play dough.

Part of the baking of Kashveera's clay came from her parents who refused to give up. This added impetus to Kashveera's development and phenomenal growth. This is indicative of Kashveera's option of not attending a school for the deaf and not learning sign language! "What is normal?" quips this jovial lass. After enduring sometimes excruciating peer pressure and finding a niche, she achieved five

distinctions in her matric year- this at a normal school. A remarkable achievement indeed!

She then enrolled to do her Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) with a Deloitte bursary. She graduated within three years, without failing a single subject, and became the first deaf graduate in the history of UKZN. Kashveera then proceeded to do her Honours at UNISA and graduated within one year in 2008. This bright spark also received the Golden Key Award for academic excellence during her first year of study.

The next hurdle was to complete her articles for three years at Deloitte Durban, and she passed both her qualifying board examinations on her very first attempt, and then became the first deaf chartered accountant in South Africa [CA(SA)].

Does the profession and deafness seem incongruous? Not for this spirited young lady who has the gift of a very broad vision and the ability to see the proverbial bigger picture. "The profession is a very rewarding one even though the road is demanding, do not despair – instead work hard. A CA(SA) after your name is well worth the long journey!

My journey to success has been a very long one, obviously with many upheavals and downfalls, but it has been a very fruitful one at the end. I also ensured that I studied hard at school and at university and even when I wrote my professional qualifying examinations. I used to sit in the front of the class or in the front of a lecture room, and still have the habit even in a meeting to sit in the front. My road has been a long one, one fraught with many challenges, but onward we must journey for the wheels of time halt for none." says Kashveera.

"I have client-facing roles which require extensive interpersonal skills. My clients have been more than understanding, most of them actually amazed and inspired. I have spread deaf awareness through corporate channels as well through a multitude of client interactions and have had the great fortune to break many perceptions including the perception that the deaf are dumb, which they are not, unless they choose to be. My struggle for inclusiveness is far from over, overcoming barriers was part of the journey. There were instances when I was mocked at, or made fun of, because I sounded different, but then I always rose above that, and strived to see goodness in everyone and everything. There were times when I was discriminated against, but that, along with being painful, gave me the great strength to get up and face my battle head on. There was this constant human rights battle which my father spearheaded for the vast majority of my life: the right to dignity, the right to education and the right to be free and heard," says an insightful Chanderjith.

Kashveera is currently employed at Anglo American, a diversified mining company as part of their business assurance services. In this role, Chanderjith is responsible for dealing with risk, ethics, governance, forensics, and internal audits.

The CA(SA) profession has amassed a reputation that is unrivalled worldwide. The only way that this good reputation can be sustained is if competent and credible professionals join its ranks and add to the growing brand. It is clear that a CA(SA) of the stature of Kashveera will do just that! □

Author: Yuven Gounden; photography BrightLiquidLight. Photos taken at The Maslow Hotel.

The tenacity of this youngster grew from a young and tender age and she learnt to be resilient and to not let the odd insult, malicious teasing and the blatant door slamming deter her.



RESORTING TO WORLD-CLASS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Franz Gmeiner's career has taken interesting twists and turns. By *Yuven Gounden*

It would seem like Franz Gmeiner was destined to be an entrepreneur. It seems like even he was baffled at the extent to which he took his entrepreneurship aspirations. The journey to the Orion Group dream was punctuated by deviations. But the eventual success of the group's 13 hotels and lodges is testimony to Gmeiner's resilience and unique brand of entrepreneurship.

"I only ever had one ambition in life – to be an entrepreneur. Anything to do with business excites me. The big thrill is the chase and the close of a deal."

Where did it all start? Strangely enough, all of this has its roots in Austria.

"Arriving in South Africa with my parents in 1963 as a seven-year-old immigrant child was the beginning of learning how to cope in unfamiliar and sometimes hostile environments. This naturally awakened my competitive nature," says Gmeiner.

"Learning a foreign language and to be taught not in my mother tongue made me aware that one can always be successful regardless of circumstances.

"I was fortunate to have great teachers and lecturers who taught, counselled and encouraged me to succeed. I therefore succeeded beyond even my own expectations at school and university. My success was recognised by attaining academic honours colours both at school and university as well being placed in the top ten when I wrote the chartered accountancy board examination in 1983. I qualified as a CA(SA) at the age

of 25 and owned my first office tower when I was just 33 years old."

Gmeiner attended an Afrikaans-medium school in Germiston. His first challenge was a religious and linguistic one: he was foreign in this blue-collar community in terms of not being able to speak Afrikaans and being a Catholic in a predominantly Dutch Reformed Church community. He had to learn fast!

THE ORION GROUP
SUCCESS IS TRULY
HOME GROWN WITH THE
GMEINER COUPLE FIRMLY
AT THE HELM

Unlike most successful entrepreneurs, it seems like Gmeiner's experience taught him to be close to his family and his extended family – his staff members. He has certainly put his money where his mouth is, proverbially speaking, of course. He gave every single Orion staff member shares in Orion Real Estate Limited: a total of five million shares were distributed in this manner.

Gmeiner has also got his family members involved in the running of the Orion Group.

"I am married to Dr Antoinette Gmeiner. She works with me in the organisation fulfilling various roles as HR director, CEO training division and partner in the Spa and wellness division (Bakwena Day Spa). She is also my life partner in that we continuously discuss and contemplate how to negotiate the future. She is my strongest critic and my staunchest supporter.

"We have three children: Nadia, who is 23 years old, completed a BComm and postgraduate marketing diploma at Stellenbosch University. She is currently working at our Santé Hotel & Spa near Paarl. Ingrid, 21, completed a BComm degree and is currently studying toward a postgraduate LLB degree at Stellenbosch University, while Franz Joseph is 19 and is a first-year BComm student at Stellenbosch University.

"If one were to look at the Orion Group portfolio, it would seem like it was 'inherited' or 'bought off'. However, it is clear that the Orion Group success is truly home grown with the Gmeiner couple firmly at the helm."

However, the path to success for Gmeiner was by no means an easy one, given that Franz was Austrian by birth.

"My career has taken interesting twists and turns from the start.

"During my third year of study at the then Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) I became restless and decided to switch to part-time studies. I realised that completing my degree was important and since auditing firms offered study leave at the time I decided to apply for a position as an articled clerk at one of the medium-sized firms. My application was successful on condition that I continued to study toward a B Comm accounting degree.

"I then converted my registration from a B Comm degree to the B Comm Accounting stream. I wrote the qualifying examination (QE) in 1983 and achieved Top 10 ranking.

"I wanted to try out the commercial world and joined Sentrachem as

junior business analyst. After two years I realised that I wanted to do my own thing. However, a lack of capital limited my options. This prompted me to negotiate a partnership with a small auditing practice - A Cohen & Co, with six employees at one office in Johannesburg.

"The name was changed to Cohen & Gmeiner and the firm proceeded to grow in leaps and bounds over a 14-year period to become the 13th largest auditing firm in South Africa with offices in Johannesburg, Nelspruit, Alberton and Pretoria." (No doubt, the phenomenal success of this firm could be attributed to the addition of the "Gmeiner" name and the drive that accompanied the addition!)

"During this period we needed larger office premises for our Johannesburg offices. The initial lease agreement with an option to purchase would become Orion's first commercial property with the acquisition of the 11-storey Intec House on the corner of Eloff and Marshall streets in central Johannesburg.

"This was the start of what is today Orion Real Estate Ltd, which is listed on the main board of the JSE and in which I have a controlling interest.

"Along the way we invested in a hotel, office tower and retail complex in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. In 1999 the hotel operator/tenant could no longer meet the rental payment. Some desperate phone calls and contemplation later it was decided that I should take over the operations of Hotel Devonshire in Braamfontein. This was the beginning of what is today a portfolio of 13 hotels and lodges spread over South Africa and Lesotho. In other words, I took need, combined it with opportunity and courage, and created a career path for myself.

"Access to funding was always a challenge. Both property and hotel businesses are particularly capital intensive. With inadequate or mismatched funding one sometimes makes compromise decisions.

"Business challenges often

become the seed for learning and new opportunities. With hindsight I should have nurtured some personal and business relationships more," he concluded.

Gmeiner is bent on growing the Orion Group brand and expanding his operations. One of the passions that he shares with his wife is executive and business coaching. All management staff members benefit from this training and it provides fertile breeding ground for great team spirit and it is bound to be the impetus for propelling the group to greater heights.

"Our group has grown every year for the past 23 years. I see a diversified group with a strong focus on property investment and development, hotels and leisure and also the wellness industry.

"The book *Clock builders and not time tellers* has also been an inspiration because it provides comfort in the knowledge that great companies do not happen overnight and that one has to work at it for what may be a seemingly long time to develop a long lasting company.

"We have a number of key focus points:

- Successful companies have good people management strategies. Our group has now attained Top Employer status (administered by the Top Employer Institute) for the third consecutive year. This very rigorous audit process interrogates HR practices in detail and focuses us on where we need to improve.
- Investment in ITC infrastructure.
- Team coaching principles. All Orion management teams participate in monthly team coaching session per team. World-class coaching practices are being deployed and this results in team members becoming more engaged and productive."

When Gmeiner is not crunching numbers and managing his proud investment, he loves cooking, particularly slow-cooking meat dishes



Franz Gmeiner

such as short rib. He also loves watching cooking shows on television and his wife shares his passion for food shows.

Among his other pastimes are watching rugby, travelling the world, working up a sweat at the gym, and reading, of course.

"I love spending time reading about what makes people tick and how visualisation links to real life tangible manifestations. The limitless power of the mind via thought and meditation interests me tremendously. We also practice the principles of Feng Shui.

"I am a non-practising Catholic, but I do believe in the higher power of God."

The many years of experience and the huge mountains that Gmeiner conquered make him seem like the proverbial Oracle of Delphi.

"Also very important to me is the knowledge that we will all leave this world as we entered. Therefore, accumulation of any kind of capital – whether physical or intellectual – must be put to good use. My purpose is to share my knowledge and experience with people and organisations that may find this useful. Furthermore, my accumulation of capital resources must find a way back to communities

via upliftment, development and job creation programmes.”

Youngsters, especially those aspiring to be CAs(SA), can derive great benefit from listening to Gmeiner’s words of wisdom.

“Decide whether in fact you really want to become a CA(SA). Once so decided, put in all and every effort to attain this goal. This obviously means dedicated hard work. Once qualified the world becomes your oyster because your life will unfold in ways not imagined by you and I am testimony to the notion

that one can live one’s dream.

“I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the many people who I have had interactions with in my life to date, both personally and professionally. Without their love, support, encouragement and even pushing and shoving I would not have achieved what I have.”

Orion is a prominent constellation located on the celestial equator and visible throughout the world. It is one of the most conspicuous and recognisable constellations in the night

sky. It was named after Orion, a hunter in Greek mythology.

These words ring true for the group as well as for the hunter. The group is set on becoming more conspicuous as it evolves towards to global heights. It is clear that the “hunter” has some sort of entrepreneurial sixth sense to succeed in a highly competitive environment.

AUTHOR | Yuven Gounden is Project Manager Communication and Marketing at SAICA

THE PLACE OF MANY KUDU

Yuven Gounden visited Ditholo in Limpopo

There comes a time when we feel the need to escape the concrete jungle and travel off the beaten track to a place where we can recharge our batteries and get back in synch with nature. While steeping ourselves in the clinical business world, we tend to become anaesthetised to the crisp fresh air of the great outdoors and the sounds of nature: the bird calls, the sound of bees buzzing.

If you are looking to exploring places away from the cities, Ditholo Lodge in Limpopo province is the right place. Ditholo means “the place of many kudu” and there are indeed large numbers of them at the lodge and surroundings. Other animals include giraffe, warthog, zebra, waterbuck, impala, blesbuck, blue wildebeest, and a lot more.

The lodge is situated about 165 km from Johannesburg on the road to Bela





Bela and offers accommodation in the form of four standard rooms, eight deluxe rooms, and four family rooms. All rooms have mini bars, thatched roofs, air-conditioning, ceiling fans, DSTV, and en suite bathroom/shower facilities.

Attractions for guests include a swimming pool, game drives, bird watching, fishing, pool tables and a bar area. Apart from caring for its guests, the lodge is committed to conservation and it runs nature conservation breeding programmes for hippo, buffalo, sable and nyala.

Nothing beats a sundowner at the dam or viewing deck, sipping cocktails as the sun sets over the still water, rippled only by the languid movement of the hippo with the cacophony of bird calls in the background.

If that experience is not enough to deal with city stress, there is also the

Bakwena express spa at the lodge. It is run by Nikiwe Ndhlovu and offers treatments such as body massage with hot stones, Indian head massage, foot and hand massages, body exfoliation, manicures and pedicures. They cater for individual massages as well as romantic couples massages, and one also has the option of enjoying a spa treatment on the banks of the river.

Excellent gastronomic experiences await at the lodge itself or at the outdoor African boma offering traditional South African cooking including meat dishes, potjiekos, African delicacies, and a range of desserts. Head chef Thomas Pienaar has been at Ditholo for nearly two years and has 42 years' experience as a chef at various restaurants in at least five provinces of South Africa: "I just love cooking, especially curries, because of my experience working in Durban. I place lots of importance

on quality ingredients and local fresh produce. I am starting a vegetable garden at Ditholo and particularly enjoy making my own jams and preserves," says Thomas.

Ditholo's air-conditioned conference facility can accommodate 46 people and is equipped with all the necessary technology.

What sets Ditholo Game Lodge apart from the many others in the area? Danie Jacobs, general manager, says "at Ditholo we focus on personal experience".

For more information contact

+27 (0)86 148 8861 or e-mail
crsdit@orionhotels.co.za

ANTHQR | Ingeborg Campbell is Project Manager, Communication and Marketing at SAICA

RE-ENGINEERING OUR PROFESSIONS

South Africa's apartheid legacy left many sectors and professions with skewed demographic profiles. After twenty years of democracy, the shift in demographics in most cases has been miniscule, and transformation clearly needs to be accelerated. *By Yuven Gounden*

The Human Resources Development Council (HRDC) was established in 2010 to advise the Deputy President on issues relating to human resources development and to oversee the implementation of the Human Resources Development Strategy (HRDSA). The purpose of the HRDSA is to meet the development needs of South Africa through addressing challenges related to economic growth, social development, job creation, poverty and inequality.

South Africa's then Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe, said at the HSDC Summit in March 2014: 'Furthermore, the Council has provided space where a common agreement has been reached amongst the various professions, including engineering, the health profession, social work, and few others to explore the implementation of a model similar to the Thuthuka Programme in their respective fields. Thuthuka has achieved tremendous results in expanding access to the field of chartered accountancy. The role of the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) has been an example worth emulating by other professions.' His remarks stem from an HRDC initiative in 2013, according to which SAICA was mandated to lead the way in transforming the professions. Chantyl Mulder, Executive Director: Nation Building at SAICA, is represented on the HRDC and has embarked on such a transformation strategy.

Thus far the focus has been is on the engineering and the actuarial professions, and the transformation efforts are showing encouraging results.

ENGINEERING TRANSFORMATION

The Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) has embarked on a journey of transformation in order to ensure maximum efficiency in the delivery of its core mandate and consequently improve its service to the engineering profession and the public at large.

In accordance with the Engineering Professions Act 46 of 2000, ECSA's core mandate comprises the accreditation of engineering programmes, the registration of engineering professionals, and ensuring that registered professionals adhere to the code of conduct.

The fact that South Africa is a developing economy places ECSA in a critical position as key role-player providing well-equipped engineering professionals with the necessary skills. The ECSA is aware of the significant challenges that are associated with its role in the national development agenda. Paramount among these is ensuring a critical mass of registered engineering professionals, whilst striving to meet the set equity targets.

Currently, South Africa has one engineer for every 3 100 people, compared to Germany with one engineer for every 200 people. In countries like Japan, the UK and the USA, this ratio stands at about 1:310. Therefore, South Africa needs to produce ten times more engineers in order to compete favourably with developed economies.

In addition, according to the ECSA database, the current profile of registered engineering professionals is not balanced in terms of gender and race. There are approximately 34 000 registered professionals in the database, of which more than 14 800 are registered

professional engineers with a degree from a recognised university. Of this total, females constitute only 3%, while blacks comprise less than 12%.

In order to deliver efficiently and equitably on its mandate, ECSA has had to revisit its processes, systems, culture, infrastructure and even the legislation that governs it. The necessary interventions are being managed through a joint implementation committee and transformation task team.

ECSA CEO Siphso Madonsella says that 'ECSA has been myopic in its approach and change was necessary, but I am glad that ECSA can play a developmental role. I agree with the decision to make ECSA adopt a robust approach to the industry.'

Edgar Sabela, Executive: Strategic Services at ECSA, says: 'We have a programme called Engenius, which targets high school learners to create awareness in rural areas, especially girl learners. We use young engineers as role models and run roadshows to educate learners on the various routes to follow to become engineers. We have registered the Sakhli Mfundo ('Building Education') Education Trust, which will mirror the Thuthuka model. We launched a pilot project in October 2014 with the University of Johannesburg (UJ) with 23 participating students.'

Madonsella says targeting disadvantaged learners and students will go a long way to bridge the divide that still exists. 'The programme has all the ingredients to make it successful: incorporating elements such as life skills will certainly add value to the programme. I want to also attract females, especially those from rural areas, to the profession.'

SYNTHESISING RESPONSIBILITIES, CREATING HARMONY

COMING FULL CIRCLE ... SAICA BOARD MEMBER NICOLETTE JACOBS, SOUTHERN REGION PRESIDENT, SHARES HER PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY AND CHALLENGES WITH US. *YUVEN GOUNDEN* SPOKE TO NICOLETTE

In the words of the great philosopher Plato, "Music is the movement of sound to reach the soul for the education of its virtue." Music epitomises harmony and for many people it complements or even navigates their lives – both personally and professionally.

This tenet applies aptly to Nicolette Jacobs, who is the SAICA Southern Region president and is a SAICA board member. Nicolette is a partner in the Financial Services Division of PwC Cape Town. She is a chartered accountant [CA(SA)] and holds a master's degree in Business Administration (MBA).

While at school, she had her sights set on a career as an accounting teacher. However, owing to the redundancies in teacher vacancies at the time, she decided on a new career path – the CA(SA) route. Her father also played a role in steering her along this path.

"My father wanted me to be a chartered accountant. Someone in our community became a CA(SA) and he was probably the only one in our community at the time. His name is Tanswell Louw. I had a chat with him and he inspired me to pursue the CA(SA) route."

CAs(SA) are sought-after professionals on a global scale and the road has by no means been easy. "My mother was the force driving the numerous applications for bursaries at the time."

Preceding the Thuthuka Bursary Fund (TBF) was the CAs' Eden Trust, which was established to assist needy talented students to pursue a career as chartered accountants. A principle that is endemic to the TBF (and Eden Trust beneficiaries) is the ethos of "giving back", and Nicolette is a beneficiary with such a mind set.

"I've come full circle from being a CAs' Eden Trust bursary holder whilst studying at UCT to leading our region as president. I know the hard work that has gone into transforming our profession via this route and will continue to support the profession in this space.

"I've recently been appointed as the region's president and it's

an exciting time for me. I have learnt a lot in my years with SAICA through my initiatives within the SAICA Southern Region Council as well as within the Transformation Committee. I also enjoy the privilege of being on the SAICA Board, which brings with it new perspectives and challenges.

"My vision for the region is to get our members more actively engaged in the promotion of our profession to future generations and, in so doing, transforming our profession further. Our young members (YCAN) are a vital part of the membership. Getting their active engagement in the SAICA initiatives is critical. It is important for the sustainability of the profession as well as developing the future leaders for our country. From the discussions with our younger members, it is clear that they want to play an active role and are getting involved at grassroots level with the Maths Development Camps, to mention but one of the programmes run by SAICA. The energy that younger members exude generates much excitement and shows that the profession is vibrant and energetic. Tapping into this source of energy to create further opportunities for our members is what I would love to do.

"Our members in business form a large constituency in our region and finding platforms for them to engage within the region is important. They too are faced with challenges and creating a platform that speaks to this constituency is something our local Members in Business Committee is tackling.

"Our younger members are also looking for role models among our business leaders. Creating opportunities for mentoring or networking will support and provide the guidance being sought after by our younger members. So I believe that these two constituencies will be able to generate synergies whilst working together.

"I take the reins of our region in a year when our country's democracy is 20 years young. In the profession we've also reached a pivotal point in that it was the first time in the history of the Public Practice Examination that the number of black (African, Coloured and Indian) candidates who attempted the PPE represented over 50 per cent of the total. Coupled with this, we had an overall pass rate of 70 per cent among these candidates."

These numbers are encouraging, says Nicolette. "We now have our black CAs(SA) in the market place, but we need to find



opportunities for them to participate and take an active role in the profession. I would therefore like to call on all our CAs(SA) to maintain high standards or plough back into society through the many interventions that are available, as I believe we have the power to effect economic transformation in our country.”

Apart from her huge responsibilities and exceptional track record, this 30-something lady still has time for her family. She is married to William and they have two children: Thomas (6), and David, who is 20 months old.

Nicolette enjoys reading, especially women’s magazines and – a newly acquired taste – home décor. As far as movies go, Nicolette enjoys romance and action, but she really loves watching animation movies with her kids.

It is clear that Nicolette lives a full life and that the buzz words “work–life integration” ring true for her. On this point she says it’s all only possible with the great support structure she has in place, including a wonderfully supportive husband and grandparents, and an extended family that lend a hand when needed.

“In terms of music, I am a classical music lover. I enjoy our church’s CDs along with greats such as Mozart and Beethoven. In the contemporary space, jazz and most pop musicians are great to listen to, along with R&B.

“I love going out with the family and participating in the church choir and orchestra. I play the flute and conduct our congregational orchestra as well, and I find that most relaxing. We’ve got a lovely group of string players with a few woodwind instruments and of late we had a trombone join the group, so that’s great.”

Not only the region but also SAICA will see the benefits of having Nicolette advance within the ranks. Music to our ears ...? ☐

HOW SHE DOES IT

SAICA WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

BOOK NOW!
31 JULY 2014
 AVIANTO, MULDERSDRIFT

VISIT
www.saica.co.za/wil
 #WIL

WHERE WOMEN CONTINUE TO REINVENT LEADERSHIP

Last year we engaged on the status of women re-inventing leadership by exploring how women have overcome challenges through their own unique brand of responsible leadership. At this year’s conference, you will experience the power of holistic women leaders who have cracked the glass ceiling, as each shares “HOW SHE DOES IT”.

Learn, share, experience and network with some of the most distinguished captains of industry at this powerful leadership conference, and re-emerge as a better you.

GUEST SPEAKERS

- Jenna Clifford
- Wendy Lucas Bull
- Tsakani Ratsela CA(SA)
- Nonkululeko Manyika CA(SA)
- Yvonne Kgame

The conference will address leadership, tackling topics such as:

- Being a leader in business and in your community
- Managing talent and mentoring South Africa’s future leaders
- Leadership in Africa: leading across cultures, and many more



www.saica.co.za/wil
 #WIL



FOR THE RECORD

Caroline Wostmann CA(SA) was the first woman over the line at the 2015 Two Oceans Marathon. She completed the 56-km ultra-marathon in a time of 03:41:23, thus becoming the first South African woman to clinch the title in 14 years. **Yvren Gounden** reports

Frith van der Merwe's 1989 unbroken record time for the Two Oceans Marathon is 3:30:36 and her unbroken record time for the Comrades Marathon of 5:54:43 also still stands. Wostmann's time is fairly close to that of Frith's record in the Two Oceans Marathon. Asked if she intends breaking these records, Wostmann said, 'At the moment I can't even begin to compare myself to Frith, who was a phenomenal athlete with far superior times to me in all distances. My time for the Comrades was 6:51. But if you train hard and prepare, anything is possible.'

Champion runner Frith van der Merwe said: 'It was good to see a South African woman win after such a long time. I watched the race and I saw that Caroline finished the race strongly and while others ran strongly at the beginning and finished badly, Caroline ran the race to perfection.'

Wostmann, 32, lives in Pretoria and is a lecturer in management accounting and finance at Wits University. She is married to Haiko, who also acts as her manager. A born multi-tasker, Wostmann is a mother to two young girls, Isabell (4) and Gabriella (7). She loves running (with renewed passion now) and spending time with her family, and manages to enjoy a good work-life balance. It does not end there: this young lady submitted her master's a few days before she ran the Two Oceans. To her, running reflects most of what of life is about: perseverance, hard work, and commitment.

'I used to train on my own, but after I did so well in the Comrades last year,

I decided to take it more seriously, and engaged Lindsey Parry from the High Performance Centre (HPC) in Pretoria as a coach. Winning the Two Oceans was a surreal experience for me. Often one visualises achieving something that's far beyond what you think you are capable of in an attempt to push your boundaries. I had never even got to the point of visualising that I could win Two Oceans because it felt so far out of my reach. So imagine my surprise. It's a moment I will cherish forever,' she says.

Of course, like most things in life, hard work is a prerequisite. And preparing and training for the marathon was no exception for Wostmann.

'It is still a challenge to fit in the time for running. Often I don't feel like getting up at 4 am when the alarm goes off, but I know that if I don't get up I will not be able to complete my session, and so I drag myself out of bed to train. I train every day of the week. On Mondays to Fridays I train twice a day. Apart from my Two Oceans win, I came sixth in the women's category in the 2014 Comrades and was the first South African lady over the finish line,' she says.

'I matriculated in 2001 from Midrand High School and went on to study BCom(Acc)(Sci) at the University of Pretoria (UP). My aptitude test had indicated that I should go into a field of a financial nature and the CA route was as one of my options. After doing some research into the nature of the profession I decided that it would be a good fit for my strengths

and personality. After four years I left UP with my Certificate in the Theory of Accounting (CTA) and honours degree and joined Deloitte, where I spent five years as part of the Deloitte family. Three of those years were spent on my training contract which I completed attaining the highest possible rating at that time. I was then thrilled to be accepted as an audit manager and spent another two years in this role. During my time at Deloitte I married Haiko and soon after we started our family.

'After the birth of my second child I realised that I was not able to give both my family and my career the attention I wanted to simultaneously and with a heavy heart I decided to leave Deloitte. I moved into a more flexible lecturing role at Wits and quickly learnt that I have a passion for teaching. I have loved every minute of my time spent interacting with students and providing them with the guidance, knowledge and skills that they will need to become the future business leaders of South Africa. It is my fifth year at Wits and it has been an extremely fulfilling job. I do, however, often miss the challenges of the corporate world and am certain that once my children are older I will move away from academia. For now, however, I am blessed with the flexibility and fulfilment the academic world offers.

'During my time at Deloitte I started running (initially as a means of losing the weight I had gained during my first pregnancy). As soon as I got over the original discomfort from lack of fitness I found the running to be a source of calm before the storm of audit

A keen balancing act

Vanuja Maharaj - an achiever at work, devoted wife and mother at home.

When you are the youngest female business executive of colour in the Auditor-General's Office (AGSA), based in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Business Unit office, carving out your niche is a challenge at first. But if you are passionate about what you do and a firm believer in skills development and mentorship, then the journey is far less arduous. So says 30-something year old Vanuja Maharaj. Vanuja is a keen number cruncher from her early school years.

It is clear that she is set to play a decisive role in the public sector, following in the footsteps of the Auditor-General, Terence Nombembe, in his unwavering vision for the skills development so critical to addressing the skills shortage in South Africa, especially in financial management in the public sector.

"This has been an incredible journey. Whilst I was in the private sector, I opted to deal with both private and public clients. My interest in the public sector grew as I found the work of the AGSA's office so much more meaningful and rewarding. It is meaningful in the sense that you are active in the development of people who previously did not get the opportunity to do so and contribute to the skills shortage in our country. Rewarding in the sense that I am also given the opportunity to positively influence the public sector. Interestingly enough, it was my plan to return to the private sector. That has since changed, purely because I think it is very rare that as a qualified chartered accountant you get the opportunity to give back to the public sector of our developing country," says Maharaj.

When asked when this journey had commenced, Maharaj had the following to say:

"Taking up the position of KZN Business Executive is a dream come true. I am extremely passionate, motivated and focused in leading the KZN Business Unit to greater heights. My humble beginnings emanate from a quaint country town in the KZN Midlands called Howick, where I spent my school-going years. I attended Howick Secondary School and Mr. Jungbahadur, my English teacher, was a driving force. He encouraged me to enter speech contests and act in plays," says Maharaj. "This gave me a good sense of self-esteem and the prerequisite confidence that is obligatory in my current role. It would be unjust for me not to recognise my parents and brothers who have been instrumental in everything that I have achieved. With their support, I registered at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to complete my BCom degree, with the desire to qualify as a CA(SA), a sought-after designation. After completing my vacation work with all of the 'Big Four' companies, I knew I had chosen the correct career and subsequently completed my traineeship at Ernst & Young (E&Y). My interest in the AGSA grew from the first of many interactions with the local Pietermaritzburg office and when a Senior Manager position became available, I decided that it was time for a change, as I found the public sector more meaningful and rewarding. I joined the KZN BU around mid-2005 as a Senior Manager and was promoted to deputy business executive in March 2008.

Despite my thriving career, I feel my greatest success story is that I am married to a wonderful husband and am blessed with two awesome children. My son and daughter give me the will to succeed in my position, as it means I have the opportunity to provide a better life for all.

I always keep the AGSA vision in mind by living our values at all times, and thereby fulfilling the reputation promise of building public confidence. Our mandate is significant as it is about making a difference to people's lives. One gets the opportunity to mentor and train people to be future leaders as well as to contribute to a scarce skills pool in our country. Being true to oneself is essential and I truly believe that doing the right thing and doing everything with excellence is essential to one's development."

It is selfless individuals such as Maharaj, who not only grow people at the AGSA, but who also serve as impeccable role models for the rest of the country. There is no doubt that South Africa, especially the youth, need credible role models and Maharaj fulfils this need. True mentorship can only be possible when a mentor practises and reflects good values himself/herself.

"At school I participated in speech contests and obtained the good fellowship award and I was Deputy Head Girl during my matric year. During my first and second years at university I obtained the prestigious Dean's Commendation award. I completed my traineeship at Ernst & Young. Mr David Withers from E&Y was instrumental in my training and development. I was then appointed as Assistant Manager and thereafter Manager. I was humbled to be nominated for a woman's excellence award by the Durban Chamber of Commerce & Industry and had the opportunity to do a Woman's Day article in the *Accountancy SA* publication."

Women, like the youth, also need role models with gravitas and this is the best way to describe this titan. As a woman in a position of responsibility, she offers a simple philosophy to success. She is especially keen on providing guidance and leadership to women.

"I started off with a very simple message: 'working smarter' to achieve work balance. This was especially important to me as I want more women to feel confident about taking up leadership positions and also having success in their family lives. The thought that you cannot have both has to be eliminated. I have spent lots of time with external stakeholders to develop relationships and currently my focus is on investing in internal stakeholders to achieve excellence."

Maharaj sees herself as working extensively in the public sector. She would also like to see more young people pursuing the CA(SA) career path. In 2012, for the third year in a row, the World Economic Forum rated South Africa as the best performing country when it came to the strength of auditing and reporting standards. The nation needs to swell our numbers of dedicated CAs(SA) to maintain this standard.

"I was brought up in a home where we were taught that education must never be compromised. Working hard and being dedicated as well as doing every task with excellence would contribute to a better future for us. It was extremely difficult and challenging for my parents who had to revise their budgets continuously to ensure that they did their bit whilst we concentrated on studying. I wish that every learner and student could be inspired, motivated and supported to this extent. Choosing a career as a CA(SA) opens oneself to lots of opportunities, both in the private and public sectors. It is a career that is imbued by a high level of ethics and values that is associated with brilliance and superiority. It is a qualification that is well respected, extends globally and is highly sought after."



When asked how balancing a career and a family is possible, allowing both sides the same amount of attention, Maharaj replied:

"It boils down to fine-tuned planning. Work schedules are generally hectic and we have to plan in great detail. Of course my parents and parents-in-law provide support when this is needed."

On 21 May 2013 the KZN Treasury MEC, Ms Ina Cronje, announced a R16 million investment in SAICA's Thuthuka Bursary Fund (TBF) to capacitate CAs(SA) in the province in the public sector, especially at municipal level. This has exciting implications in Maharaj's work sphere.

"This is an opportunity given to achievers and it changes their lives forever. It makes dreams come true where one would have thought them impossible. One will have to continue with excellence to professionalise oneself and this skill will attract further opportunities to grow and develop oneself. This project reaches out to people who work hard despite their challenges and who continue to have hope in our country. This is a win-win situation for the country as these new talents then occupy positions where this skill is a necessity and this in turn brings hope to everyone else. This project will address the dire skills shortage in the financial sector, especially at municipal level. It will ensure that students 'plough back' to their respective areas."

Vanuja is happily married with two children, a son (nine years) and a daughter (three years). Her favourite foods are mostly Indian cuisine and roasts with vegetables. She confesses to having a sweet tooth and sometimes enjoys decadent desserts and chocolates.

"I generally read newspapers, magazines to stay abreast of the ever-changing environment and when time permits I thoroughly enjoy reading inspirational books like *The Seven Leases of Spirituality* and *The Secret*. I am an avid reader of books relating to leadership styles, too."

"Within the first 15 minutes of a movie I usually assess if I will be watching the entire movie or not. I thoroughly enjoy comedies, action as well as thrillers. I definitely enjoy a wide range of music and try to get to as many concerts as possible as I enjoy dancing as a pastime and therefore prefer dance music. I watch and support lots of sport, especially football, cricket and rugby. Relaxation is spent preparing a meal for the family, getting to the gym at least three times a week, being a kid with the kids by spending time watching their choice of television and movies and teaching them new things. I try not to forget that our children are definitely the main drivers in keeping us young! I am also a keen BMW fan."

To all the exhausted executives (and others) out there, especially those at near burnout level, please seek this icon out in the KZN province and ask her for the secret formula. Who knows? It may change your life forever! "

Author: Yvonne Gaurden

BE SURE TO ATTEND... THE ONE DAY SAICA PRACTICE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE 2013

WINNING STRATEGIES TO GEAR UP YOUR FIRM FOR THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

QuickBooks

PROGRAMME

- 8:30am - 4:30pm
- ▶ How to deliver extraordinary client service
- ▶ What does a well run practice look like?
- ▶ Essential management strategies
- ▶ Getting your practice fit for the future

VENUES & DATES

- 2 September Durban
- 3 September Cape Town
- 4 September Johannesburg
- 5 September Bloemfontein

YOUR SPEAKERS FOR THE DAY

Two International Experts on Practice Management Ken McManus and Mark Lloydbottom who together share 60 years of experience working with accounting firms, to improve their profitability and management.

CONFIDENTIAL INTER FIRM SURVEY

- ▶ Take part in South Africa's first live confidential inter firm survey.
- ▶ Benchmark key practice information against other SA firms.

COST

Members: R2,250 (incl VAT)
Non members: R2,550 (incl VAT)
(Discount for bookings of 3 or more)

INFO

For more information or to reserve your seat email: smp@saica.co.za or book at www.saica.co.za/smp



THE 2013-14 STRATEGIC PRACTICE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

develop influence lead



I may lack hearing, but not ambition

A deaf CA(SA) shares how qualifying was her ticket to the world.



Leigh Burton was always encouraged by her parents, regardless of her hearing disability, to complete a degree that would enable her to support herself and allow her, as a woman, to be financially independent. Her career of choice was that of a Chartered Accountant [CA(SA)]. Leigh always saw how much her father enjoyed his career and this motivated her to follow the same route as him. Leigh is one of the first deaf CAs(SA) to qualify in South Africa.

A further motivation for choosing this career is Leigh's love of travel. And travel she did indeed. Visiting exotic destinations such as the Caribbean, Mauritius, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, London and the United States gave her a sense of fulfilment.

"I also wanted to complete a qualification that had international recognition and would allow me to travel all over the world if need be since one of my passions is travel. I have always enjoyed numbers and shared this passion with my father who is also a CA(SA)."

It is said that when one sense is lost the others are doubled. It seems that this rings true of Leigh and it also enhanced her sixth sense, making her more receptive to lessons in life and to what teachers and mentors had to offer. This Johannesburg based 30-something young lady was not short of role models – and she took on their advice and philosophies with gusto!

"My biggest role model throughout my life has been my father and I strive every day to live up to the ideals and values he upholds. I also wouldn't be where I am today without the support of my mother. She has great strength and has always showed unwavering belief in me. My mother has always focused on giving me a sense of independence.

"During my school years, two people had a profound effect on the person that I am today. They were my guidance counsellors, Mr. Ken Hovelmeier and Mrs. Maureen Groch, who taught me to never doubt myself and that even with my hearing disability I could achieve my dreams and be all that I wanted to be. That moulded my belief to not use my disability as an excuse or 'cop out' in life".

Leigh attended the mainstream private schools Kingsmead College for Girls and St. Stithians Collegiate and she excelled in her studies. This was extrapolated to Wits University where she faced many challenging situations: the biggest being her ability to filter the messages from the 'noise' from her hearing aid. However, with great support from the Accounting Department at Wits, this did not deter her insatiable desire

to excel - and excel she did! When she wrote her board examination, she found that the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) gave her lots of support and this helped her to qualify as a CA(SA).

"Kicking off my career at Deloitte Johannesburg brought me into contact with a great family of mentors and friends. Alan Munitich, a Deloitte partner, played a pivotal role in my career at Deloitte right through articles and also in my role as a manager. He shared great passion for his work and for enjoyment of life as well as travel. Alan was also a great support in all facets of my work at Deloitte. I know that even though time has passed since I started my career in commerce that I can always phone Alan for a chat and advice. I must also mention Grant Krog [former partner] and Ryan Duffy [partner], who exerted a positive and strong motivational influence on me."

Leigh's area of speciality is tax and financial consulting, which can be a demanding area to work in. In her capacity as a financial/tax consultant she assists in all aspects of taxation for all taxpayer types ranging from the calculation of Income Tax, Secondary Tax on Companies (now Dividend Withholding Tax), Provisional Tax, Employees Tax, VAT and Capital Gains Tax. Other responsibilities include assisting with SARS audits and liaising with SARS directly to clear any queries or disputes pertaining to any year of assessment. Additional responsibilities include the provision of accounting and financial services, comprising preparation of annual financial statements, completion of annual returns and other statutory returns including registering of new entities, and liaison with auditors. Ad hoc duties include monitoring clients' investment portfolios and administration of share trusts, obtaining exchange control approval for non-resident clients where necessary.

Can a person with a hearing disability handle such an intimidating portfolio?

"Anything is possible. If you want to be a CA(SA) go out and achieve that goal. Nothing is stopping you, not even your disability. It may take a bit longer than most people but that doesn't matter when you cross that goal line. Always remember to believe in yourself and know that you are capable of anything."

When she is not crunching numbers, Leigh relishes surfing the social media platforms, and keeping abreast of the changes in the technological world. Leigh believes that Twitter and Facebook are just two examples of the many social media platforms that are changing the face of how we interact with people, not only on a personal level, but also in business. Leigh is of the opinion that social media is definitely a big player in our lives today. She also enjoys taking time out in the gym, socialising with her friends, planning holidays and catching up on good reads when she has spare time.

Leigh encourages young people to pursue a career as a CA(SA). This is sound advice considering that South Africa has a shortage of about 5 000 CAs(SA).

"In as much as the career of a CA(SA) is challenging it is also very rewarding. My advice to youngsters would be if being a CA(SA) is your dream never give up pursuing it until you get it. The world is definitely your oyster once you have your CA(SA) qualification."

It is clear that Leigh did not perceive her disability as an obstacle. Instead she chose to rise above her circumstances and to pursue her goals with enthusiasm. Leigh epitomises the adage that 'the sky is the limit'. □

Author: Yuven Gounden.



SAICA'S SUCCESSES

IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THROUGH ITS THUTHUKA PROGRAMMES, SAICA IS CONTINUALLY SEEKING WAYS TO DO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAs(SA)

South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) focuses on education as one of its priorities to address the issue of transformation and growth in the country.

Some of the NDP's priorities are:

- Eradicate infrastructure backlogs.
- Provide one million learning opportunities through community education and training centres.
- Improve the throughput pass rate to 80 per cent by 2030.
- Increase enrolment at universities by at least 70 per cent.

This ethos is clearly mirrored in SAICA's unit that focuses on Professional Development, Transformation and Growth.

EXAMINATIONS AND STATISTICS

Aspiring chartered accountants achieved excellent results in Part II of the Qualifying Examination, Financial Management (QE II), towards becoming CAs(SA).

The overall pass rate for QE II, which was written in November 2013, was 86 per cent, an all-time high from the previous year's 78 per cent. A total of 209 candidates sat for the 2013 examination whereas only 182 candidates wrote the examination in 2012.

Mandi Olivier, Senior Executive Professional Development at SAICA, said that more African candidates wrote and passed this crucial examination. She pointed out that the number of African candidates passing had risen from 63 in 2012 to 102 in 2013 and that more than half of the successful candidates were therefore African – a milestone indeed.

"The overall pass rate among Indians, African and Coloured candidates was 84 per cent, up on last year's 71 per cent," said Olivier.

The QE II and Public Practice Examination (PPE) will be replaced in November 2014 with one assessment for all prospective CAs(SA), irrespective of where they are undertaking their training. This new form of assessment will be known as the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC). The APC has been designed to more appropriately assess professional competence taking into account changes in

education and assessment as well as looking to assessing key skills sought after by employers.

SAICA ensures that it evolves within an ever-dynamic CA(SA) environment, ensuring that qualifications remain relevant to industry requirements and dynamics. This is probably why international bodies such as the World Economic Forum and the World Bank rate SAICA so highly and why the CA(SA) designation is sought after globally.

How do we assist and support students?

Through its Thuthuka programmes, SAICA is continually seeking ways to support the development of CAs(SA), specifically Africans and Coloureds, in an attempt to meet one of our key strategic drivers in facilitating the transformation of the profession. As this is the final

JAMES SITHEMBELE





step in the qualification process, SAICA offers practical assistance to candidates.

To date, the Thuthuka programmes have contributed a quarter of newly qualified African and Coloured CAs(SA).

TWO THUTHUKA BENEFICIARIES' STORIES

JAMES SITHEMBELE

"I am so excited to hear that I have passed the IRBA Public Practice Examination (Audit), which was my last professional board exam to becoming a chartered accountant.

"This is great news. The Thuthuka programme has played a massive role in me being where I am today. I now have until the end of the year to finish my articles at Deloitte.

"My family would never have been able to put me through university. Through hard work and my faith in God I was able to study at one of South Africa's best universities at no cost to my family. I usually say when I talk to other young people: the Thuthuka bursary was designed with people like me in mind. It requires nothing but your commitment to academic excellence on your way to becoming a chartered accountant.

"Thank you to Unathi Speirs who believed in me when there seemed to be no way. Thank you to Lwando Bantom from SAICA who is the pillar of strength in our Eastern Cape region. Thank you to Nthato and Desmond from SAICA who came to NMMU to give a presentation on 'Attitude' in 2011 – when I was so negative because I had failed my honours. They changed my life for the better. I have never failed since then.

"Thank you to Chantyl Mulder from SAICA who heads the Professional Development, Transformation and Growth unit and who bravely knocked on various doors seeking funding and support for a black kid. This is transformed action in itself.

"I will never forget the role you all played. I vow to be one of the best community-centred and empowering individuals – this is how we change communities: you impact one person and that person impacts others."

THE VUSI NKABINI STORY

Vusi Nkabini is 52 years old and has just added the prestigious CA(SA) designation to his name.

After Vusi had completed matric in 1981 in Middelburg, Mpumalanga, he worked for years as a laboratory technician. Then he went to Rhodes University to pursue his dream of qualifying as a chartered accountant. He attended Rhodes from 1986 to 1989 and

completed his BCom degree followed by the CTA. He then wrote the board examinations five times and failed.

In 2008 he again enrolled for the CTA, but contracted chickenpox. In 2009 he enrolled once again. This time the taxi that he was travelling in broke down. He had to run five kilometres to the exam venue and arrived an hour late. Not surprisingly, he experienced anxiety and was able to finish only one question. He re-wrote the examination in 2011 and had one supplementary examination to write.

Finally, in 2012, he wrote QE 1 and passed. He enrolled for PPE in 2013 and heard on 21 February 2014 that he had passed and that he can finally add the sought-after CA(SA) designation to his name. He describes his joy as "dizzy" and for a 52-year-old, this can be a fulfilling experience indeed.

To Vusi, he is a worthy role model to his three children: an 18-year-old son (who is currently in Grade 12), a 15-year-old daughter, and a 12-year-old son.

Who says that chartered accountants are dull and boring people in grey suits? What do some of them do in their spare time (when they manage to get some)?

Says Vusi: "I grew up playing soccer. I also have a deep love for music, especially South African gospel and choral music. I follow national cricket, rugby and soccer. I love eco-tourism and enjoy travelling and admiring our country's natural beauty."

And then there's karate: "I obtained a karate black belt in 2004 and visited Japan where I trained under, among others, Master Hirokazu Kanazawa, Master Manabu Murakami and Master Tatsuo Suzuki. I obtained a few gold and silver medals in karate competitions, but unfortunately my karate career was cut short by a groin muscle injury." □



CA MBA.

Most powerful letters in the alphabet.

The GIBS MBA is the only Executive MBA in South Africa ranked by the prestigious *Financial Times* Executive MBA ranking. For accountants who mean business.

**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

www.gibs.co.za/ftmba

Introducing Godfrey Mongatane CA(SA)

"We need to steer clear of this poverty of ambition, where people want to drive fancy cars and wear nice clothes and live in nice apartments, but don't want to work hard to accomplish these things. Everyone should try to realise their full potential."

These words by America's first black president echo the sentiments and drive of Godfrey Mongatane, a proud recipient of The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) Thuthuka Bursary Fund (TBF). Mongatane is a technical learning manager at the Office of the Auditor-General, and a recently qualified chartered accountant CA(SA).

The TBF was established in 2005 by SAICA. Thuthuka facilitates the journey of disadvantaged black and coloured students hoping to qualify as CAs(SA), thereby contributing to transformation and growth within this sector.

It's a unique fund for accounting students, which ensures that students receive experienced mentorship and additional lectures, and helps them bridge the gaps between high school and university, and between university and the world of work.

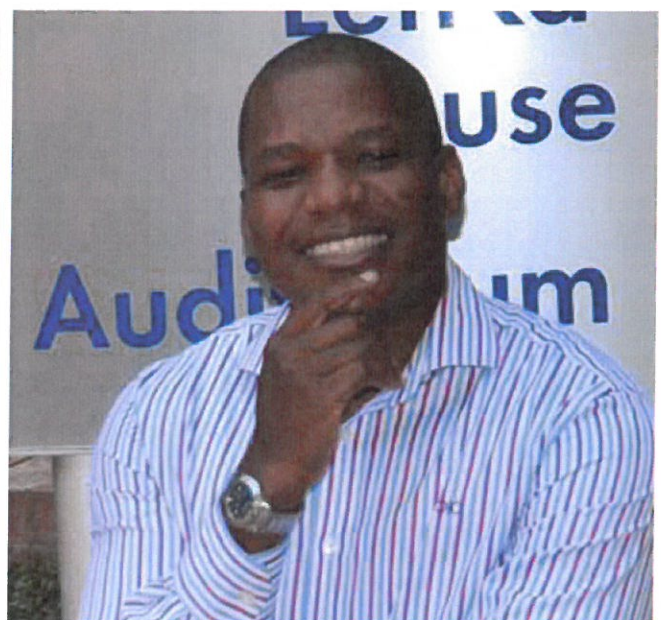
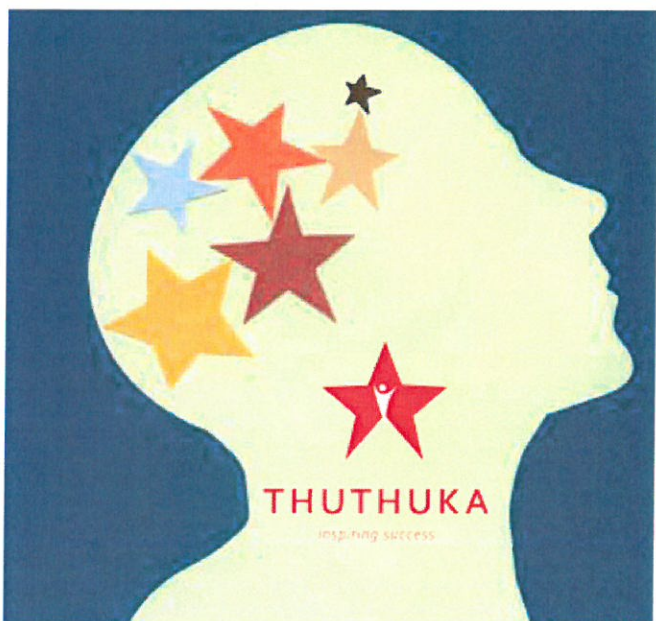
About 1 200 Thuthuka students are currently attending nine universities across the country. The first 26 students qualified as CAs(SA) in early 2012. A second batch of approximately 50 students will qualify in 2013.

Mongatane epitomises the Thuthuka spirit of resilience and of "putting back".

A CA(SA) that hated mathematics and accounting in high school? "I hated maths and accounting in high school because I was failing them, but chose to do commercial subjects as a challenge to myself. I was good at physics and figured there isn't much to learn there, so I took accounting."

It is this spirit of facing challenges that can be attributed to his phenomenal success. "I was very reserved and was therefore bullied and teased because I came from a very poor family, and didn't have shoes or would wear old, worn-out clothes. But I did get along with everyone," says Mongatane. However, the bullying and teasing did not break his spirit. Ironically, it spurred him on to achieve greatness.

He is proud of the three distinctions he received at the end of his matric year - a record that has not been broken at Fred Ledwaba Comprehensive School in Mokopane, the school that Mongatane attended. During a recent visit to the school, Mongatane expressed his disappointment at the fact that nobody had yet broken his record after eight years. "Things have changed a lot since 2004. You guys have access to information freely, and yet the record remains. What's your excuse?" asked Mongatane. He posed a challenge



to the matriculants to break that record this year.

While he was at school, he took on odd jobs and this helped him to purchase mathematics study guides. "I was hopeless at maths in Grade 10 and failed it several times. But my motto was: if they can do it, so can I." The 'they' refers to senior students and peers who excelled at maths. Mongatane joined these individuals and they assisted him in demystifying the maths conundrum to such an extent that today he is adept at maths.

Was it solely the Thuthuka spirit that spurred Mongatane on to work tirelessly to excel at his job and to devote most of his spare time to coaching and mentoring learners, with the focus on helping them succeed in life? This selfless initiative is not focused only on the CA(SA) career path. "I am passionate about encouraging young people to overcome challenges in life and have developed a passion for others who motivated me to get to where I am today. I have a lecturing background and am very passionate about sharing knowledge."

He attributes his success to many credible role models. Being one of seven children, he lost his father in 1990 when he was three years old, and most of his upbringing was taken care of by his mother, an industrious street vendor. "My mother is a people's person who has raised us well to help others wherever and however we can. I have overcome a lot of challenges in life and have developed a passion for helping people overcome hurdles in their own lives."

When most people would give up hope, Mongatane was determined to soldier on, and then came the proverbial manna. The TBF offered Mongatane a pathway to becoming a CA(SA) – a sought-after designation.

"Besides paying for school fees, books and accommodation, the TBF also invested in developing my personal skills, and made me a well-rounded person. We were taken on work readiness camps in order to bridge the gap between what we learn at school and the realities we will face at work. At the University of Johannesburg, we had a psychologist who was always available to assist us in improving our marks. I completed my studies at the University of Limpopo, however. I was encouraged to lead high school camps and also to mentor, tutor and develop the first-year students in the programme. The TBF coordinators were always available to hear our issues and assist accordingly. The TBF is what the youngsters need today," says Mongatane.

Apart from his mother and the TBF, Mongatane also attributes his success to strong role models. "My cousin, Themba Matlou, and schoolmate, Thabo Kekana CA(SA), mentored me throughout my years of pursuing the CA(SA) dream. My former manager, Tshepiso Poho, a CA(SA), supported me throughout my articles and trained me on how to be an effective manager. I enjoyed the experience of shadowing him and this helped me tremendously," says Mongatane.

Mongatane has made an impact on many of the students and trainees whom he has mentored. This is what they say about him:

"His approach and study methods were really helpful. He would say that I must read the required in full, plan my solution, and then start writing. If I

get stuck, I must take a few minutes to think things through, and if nothing comes to mind, I must move on to the next question. That was good advice that worked." - Buyelwa Precious Tsoanyane

"Godfrey has been my mentor since I joined the office. My ability to do well academically and professionally is due to his faith in my potential, more than anything. Even when times were rough, he was one person who could see the positives in my negatives. He has been extremely supportive during my CTA year, to the extent that he will entertain my queries well into the middle of the night. He is a leader who the office should do everything to retain."

- Sibusiso Mlotshwa

The spirit of wanting to help individuals is reflected in Mongatane's ambition to be a lecturer, 20 years hence. "To all the young people out there, especially budding CAs(SA), what is your excuse? If you want something badly enough, you should work hard and set your sights on this goal. Aim high and you will achieve success."

Nthato Selebi, project director: TBF at SAICA, who has seen Mongatane grow and gotten to know him well during his journey to success, says: "Godfrey reflects the true spirit of Thuthuka. He has gone far beyond his circumstances in order to achieve great heights. However, he has not forgotten where he came from. This is reflected in his selfless pursuit of assisting others from his home town, Mokopane, who are in the same position as he once was. As a group leader at the Thuthuka camps, Godfrey proved his prowess as a born leader when he assumed responsibility, culminating in the resounding success of the camps."

SAICA's primary objective in creating the TBF in 2005 was to transform the profession so that it reflects the demographics of the country. However, this remarkable programme has achieved phenomenal success by creating leaders and magnanimous individuals who embrace the Thuthuka spirit of giving back to communities and of lifting deserving students out of poverty, propelling them to great heights. Godfrey Mongatane is a shining individual who has embraced and is bent on giving back wholeheartedly to the Thuthuka ethos. □

Author: Yuven Gounden

"Godfrey has been my mentor since I joined the office. My ability to do well academically and professionally is due to his faith in my potential, more than anything."

THUTHUKA MEANS

TRANSFORMATION

The Thuthuka Bursary Fund — setting standards for South Africa's transformation.



SAICA is keenly aware of the skills shortage in the financial services industry, and of the negative effect this shortage has on accountability and service delivery in the public sector. In response, SAICA has put its money where its mouth is, collaborating with government across a wide set of projects, all aimed at improving the public sector's ability to plan and account for its expenditure, and so to improve levels of governance, accountability and service delivery.

Furthermore, in South Africa, we are short of about 5000 CAs(SA).

By 2018 it is predicted that 10 000 new positions will be opening up in financial services every year.

Of the 35 000 members of the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), less than 2700 of these are African or Coloured men or women.

If South Africa is to achieve true transformation and growth, drastic change is required.

A vehicle through which this drastic change can be achieved is the Thuthuka Bursary Fund (TBF). This programme is fast-tracking the transformation of the South African accounting industry.

The Thuthuka programme was launched in 2002 and the Thuthuka Bursary Fund was launched in 2005, with the objective of aligning the demographic representation of the profession to accurately reflect South Africa's demographics.

THUTHUKA BURSARY FUND

"Together with many other professions, the profession of chartered accountancy is critical to the economic, social and cultural development of the country," says Minister of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Blade Nzimande. "It has the potential to play a broader leadership role in skills development in the country."

He says: "The Thuthuka project is an important initiative that serves as a strategic lever for the transformation agenda of the accounting and auditing professions."

The TBF facilitates the journey of disadvantaged African and Coloured students hoping to qualify as CAs(SA), thereby contributing to transformation and growth within this sector.

SAICA's Professional Development, Transformation & Growth Senior Executive Chantyl Mulder notes: "We want to build a brand-new team of responsible leaders who are successful and add value to society. The new generation of leaders should be significant rather than merely successful. They should be leaders who make a meaningful impact on society."

"SAICA experienced a lot of wins during 2012," says Mulder. "Particularly with respect to transformation and growth, through the Thuthuka Bursary Fund."

The SAICA strategy has a two-pronged approach: expanding the number of SAICA-accredited universities, while also increasing the number of qualified African and Coloured graduates from those universities.

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO (UL)

UL's 2011 SAICA-accreditation has meant that for the first time, students living in Limpopo no longer

had to travel to Johannesburg to study chartered accountancy.

Director of School and Needbank chair in Accountancy at the University of Limpopo, Professor Cosmo Ambe says: "We had 207 first-year students enrol for the BSAcc course in 2012, 162 second-year students, 93 third-year students, and 87 fourth-year students. The average pass rate for first-years was 88%, and 93% of second-year students passed the first semester examinations (third and fourth-year students are still writing their year-end exams)."

The National Skills Fund (NSF) directly funded the UL programme, with about R25 million supporting 452 students. This funding was generated with the assistance of Thuthuka.

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND (UMZULU)

In partnership with Bankseta, University of Cape Town (UCT) and SAICA, Government has invested R64 million into UmZulu to ensure that the university receives SAICA accreditation over the next four years.

Bankseta CEO Max Makhubalo says: "Reaching communities like Empanjeni in KZN helps us to pervasively build a case for skills development in the communities that really need empowering."

"Through this project, 400 learners will gain access to a high-quality undergraduate degree programme with international recognition," says Mulder.

UmZulu Vice-Chancellor Professor Fikile Mazibuko says: "Our students will now complete with confidence – not only acquiring a world-class qualification, but benefiting from mentorship opportunities and contributing to the development of their profession."

WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY (WSU)

Also through the NSF, the DHET is investing R84 million into WSU to ensure that it receives SAICA accreditation during the next four years.

The DHET, UCT and SAICA partnership will give 425 previously disadvantaged students access to a world-class undergraduate degree previously unavailable to them.

A WSU Administrator, Professor Laurens van Staden says: "SAICA accreditation will mean our

"Together with many other professions, the profession of chartered accountancy is critical to the economic, social and cultural development of the country."

students can be accepted by other universities without the need for bridging courses. We need more accountants, particularly black accountants. Nonetheless, we are proud of the fact that 70% of Black Cas(SA) hail from the Eastern Cape."

FULL-SERVICE STUDENT SUPPORT

The TBF Programme does more than just cover student fees. SAICA recognises that university can be overwhelming, especially for students arriving from severely under-resourced schools. Thus, a Thuthuka bursary covers tuition, books, meals, mentoring, residence fees, and even provides the students with an allowance. All students in the programme are housed in the same residence, giving them access to a built-in support group, with senior students even providing mentorship to younger students. The project has already borne fruit. To date 95 students have passed part 1 and part 2 of the qualifying examinations, thus being a step closer to qualifying as a CAS(SA), with only the training requirements left to be completed. Of these 95 students, 16 have registered as Cas(SA), 29 are regarded as prospects and the remainder are left with only training obligations to complete. There are currently about 1 500 students in the programme.

The Thuthuka programme is also transforming the financial services landscape in terms of the quality of graduates being produced. In 2011, 81% of the TBF students writing the Qualifying Examination (QE1) to become chartered accountants passed and 60% passed the QE2 – a result which has these 'disadvantaged' Thuthuka students outperforming their more 'advantaged' colleagues. Currently, 50% of those eligible to write the CA(SA) qualifying exams are African or Coloured, compared to just 1% a decade ago.

"If success is measured in terms of tertiary education results, as indeed it should be, then Thuthuka has not only met but surpassed our expectations," says Chantyl Mulder.

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT FOR CHANGE

Thuthuka is a response to the government's call for private enterprise to work in partnership with the public sector to improve service delivery. As Auditor-General Terence Nombembe puts it: "The proven success of private-public sector collaborations such as Thuthuka shows us that we can address the skills crisis in government. It should take between five and ten years to establish a sustainable skills base – after that, we just need to keep replenishing the skills."

Demonstrating government's commitment to this approach, TBF's fundraising is supplemented by Rand-for-Rand state input. For every Rand donated by the public or private sector, the National Financial Aid Scheme matches the contribution. At present, the initiative costs R42 million per annum, and the TBF's aim is to have sufficient funding to see all its current students through to the completion of their studies.

TRANSFORMING THE BASICS

SAICA also understands that the challenges facing many South African students go beyond the mere financial. Very few of our schools are producing enough skilled maths students, and some of our

universities under-perform in the training of financial services graduates. To this end, SAICA is investing in promoting and enabling core maths at schools, and continuing with its drive to improve BCCom standards at all universities.

DHET is so impressed with the strides SAICA has made in universities, that it intends to implement similar programmes for public sector employees. One of the weaknesses bedeviling colleges of Further Education and Training (FET) is a lack of qualified chief financial officers (CFOs). Government, with the help of SAICA, has instituted a programme to supplement existing skills and processes, and to ensure that this intervention results in a sustainable long-term result. Auditor-General Terence Nombembe has stated his intention to use Thuthuka to transform the public sector. "It's a no-brainer," he says. "It's the formula that could address the skills gap and restore the health of public sector finances."

ACTION AND ATTITUDE THE KEY

SAICA is, in effect, the standard bearer and the gatekeeper of accountancy in South Africa. The institute is responsible for setting the standards in ethics and best business practice, and for informing regulation and legislation. Its commitment to excellence in these fields has won the approval of accountancy institutes across the globe, and the 2011/2012 World Economic Forum Competitiveness Report once again ranks South Africa as number one in the world for strength of auditing and reporting standards.

However, SAICA is also committed to sustaining the supply of Cas(SA), and to equipping public-sector leaders with the skills to effect efficient service delivery. Rather than hand-wringing and blame-shifting, the institute has opted to confront the problems facing our transforming economy head-on, in partnership with government, by committing personnel and resources to a strategy aimed at making world-class financial management a South African reality within the next decade.

TRAINEE ALLOCATIONS

The year 2012 was the fourth year in which Thuthuka CTA graduates were allocated to SAICA-accredited donors for training, with 100 candidates allocated to 27 donors. In total Thuthuka has allocated 317 candidates as trainees since 2009.

Of the bursaries awarded in 2012, 55% are female and 45% are male; 86% of students are black and 11% are coloured. Thuthuka had a total of 804 candidates on its programme in 2012 – 54% are female and 46% are male; 88% candidates are black and 12% are coloured.

Although Thuthuka has been relatively successful in attracting funds during its short life, it is clear that more funding can only mean more success. To date, over 2 000 students have become a part of the Thuthuka legacy, the full impact of which will soon be seen in the growing number of African and coloured Cas(SA), and hopefully in the way that our public and private sectors are run. □

Author: Helen Gouwen

The career call that counts

One call can give you access to attractive Fasset benefits, incentives and programmes paving the way for your future.

Make the pivotal call on your future. If you are an employed learner, call Fasset on 086 101 0001 to find out about all our benefits including free Lifelong Learning training events, career building learnerships and the tailor-made NSFAS Loan Repayment Grant for employed learners.

Make the future count

086 101 0001 • fassetcallcentre@fasset.org.za • www.fasset.org.za



BLAIRMORION 12026

