



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

COLLEGE OF
HEALTH SCIENCES

CHS

TEACHING
&
LEARNING

SCHOOL
OF
HEALTH
SCIENCES

RESEARCH

RESTRUCTURING

ACCREDITATION

PROMOTIONS

REFLECTION
AND
IMPROVEMENT

EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

YEAR-END MESSAGE

College of Health Sciences | University of KwaZulu-Natal

Season's greetings colleagues, partners, students and friends of the **College of Health Sciences,**

As we draw the year to a close, we pause to reflect on a period that has tested us, reshaped us, and ultimately strengthened our resolve as the College of Health Sciences (CHS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The year 2025 has been one of renewal, restructuring and recommitment to our core mission: advancing excellence in health sciences education, strengthening impactful research, and serving the health needs of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and the continent.

A Year of Challenge and Resolve

This has not been an easy year. The College navigated a complex restructuring process amid a difficult global and national funding landscape, including the withdrawal of key international funding and reduced local research funding. I am deeply grateful to our staff, students and partners for their resilience, professionalism and steadfast support during this period.

I am pleased to report that the College reorganisation is nearing completion, with two newly configured Schools—Medicine and Health Sciences—now established and management structures in place. We look forward to appointing Deputy Deans early in the new year, further strengthening leadership and operational coherence.

While we celebrate progress, we also acknowledge areas where performance fell short. Postgraduate enrolment targets were not met, impacting research productivity and throughput. Despite significant investment in scholarships and postdoctoral support, we were unable to attract sufficient South African postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows. These realities compel us to intensify our recruitment, mentoring and student support efforts in the year ahead.

Strategic Restructuring: Positioning for the Future

The College restructuring marked a critical strategic turning point. Far from being an administrative exercise, it was a deliberate repositioning to ensure long-term sustainability and academic excellence. Key outcomes include **Streamlined administrative and academic functions**, reducing duplication and improving operational efficiency. **Strengthened leadership structures**, enabling clearer lines of accountability and more agile decision-making. **Enhanced support for Schools and academic clusters**, ensuring better alignment with the university's long-term strategy and national health priorities. **Improved integration between teaching, research, and community engagement**, fostering a more collaborative and responsive academic environment.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all staff, both academic and professional services, who contributed to this complex process. Your patience and commitment ensured that the College emerged stronger and better prepared for future challenges.

Project Renewal and Institutional Strengthening

Project Renewal initiatives rolled out across the College focused on optimising teaching and learning, supporting emerging researchers, strengthening financial sustainability, advancing digital transformation, and rehabilitating critical infrastructure. While these initiatives have already yielded positive change, they also remind us that renewal is an ongoing process requiring sustained effort and accountability.

We must take note that we are down on the research productivity and a number of other indicators. We therefore have to double our efforts in these issues. The reduction of registrar numbers, visa issues for international students and many other issues hinder our efforts. The SA funding landscape has also been not favourable to all, with reduced NRF and MRC funding. Hence, the CHS has now created its own fundraising committee.

The transport of students to clinical facilities is strategically being attended to, since it is one of the highest expenditures for the College. The College plans to increase its fleet considerably using the clinical training grant and other sources of funding. As such, we are proud to announce the acquisition of 22 new 23-seater buses, which will significantly enhance the transportation of our Health Sciences students to Decentralised Clinical Training platforms, while substantially reducing the considerable annual transportation costs currently borne by the College.

Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Renewal

Despite the challenges, our students continued to excel. Academic performance and throughput remained strong across programmes, supported by enhanced academic advising, curriculum modernisation and expanded digital learning platforms.

Significant curriculum rationalisation was achieved, including the introduction of common modules such as Research Methods for Health Sciences, Becoming a Health Care Professional, Community-based Care, and Health, Illness and Behaviour, alongside restructured anatomy modules across disciplines. These changes strengthen coherence, interdisciplinarity and graduate preparedness across the College.

The College also expanded academic support initiatives, modernised elements of the curriculum, and increased access to digital learning platforms. These efforts have strengthened student success and resilience, particularly in demanding clinical environments.

10 Academic Development officers and 2 Academic Leaders attended and completed the Academic Advising Programme offered by the University of Free State.

Research Excellence and Impact

Research remains central to our identity. The College recorded notable achievements, including the launch of a Clinical Trials Unit, the HIV cure trial led by Professor Thumbi Ndung'u, and climate-health interventions spearheaded by Professor Rajen Naidoo and Professor Saloshni Naidoo. Our academics continued to publish impactful research, secure competitive funding and mentor the next generation of scholars, with 50 doctoral graduates celebrated at the September graduation.

We proudly acknowledge staff who completed their PhDs, received NRF ratings, earned national and international awards, and achieved academic promotions—clear evidence of sustained excellence and leadership within the College.

Staff who graduated with a PhD include:

Dr N.B. Khan	Dr N. Ndaba
Dr S. Mbhele	Dr Hadebe
Dr S. Panday	Dr Chaggan
Dr M. Makhoba	Dr Mallum
Dr S.E. Nyawose	Dr H Mangray
Dr K.P. Dlamini	Dr S Ebrahim
Dr S.B. Dlamini	Dr H Wain
Dr B Enicker	Dr M. Nyalela
Dr DC John	Dr S.B. Karim
Dr S. Mokoena	Dr L.M.Z. Buthelezi
Dr G. Rencken	

Partnerships, Community Engagement and Clinical Impact

Our partnerships with government, hospitals, NGOs and international collaborators remain a cornerstone of our success. Community engagement initiatives, including rural outreach, clinical training support and high-impact surgical marathons, reaffirm our commitment to health equity and social impact.

School of Health Sciences Highlights

- **Professor Jeanne Grace** – Recipient of the **Lifetime Achievement Award** from the **Biokinetics Association of South Africa** in recognition of her exceptional contribution to the field.
- **Professor Pragashnie Govender (née Naidoo)** – Recipient of the **Healthcare Professional Researcher Leader Honorary Award** from **Africa Health Excellence**; also appointed to the **Ministerial Committee on Mortality and Morbidity of Children**.
- **Professor Tricia Naicker** – Unpacking STEM Careers: Her Voice in Science

- **Professor Sabiha Essack** – Conferred as a **Fellow of the University of KwaZulu-Natal** in recognition of her distinguished academic and professional contributions.
- **Professor Thaya Nadasan** – Awarded an **NRF C2 Rating** in recognition of her sustained excellence in research and scholarly contributions, reflecting her significant impact and leadership within her field.
- **Dr Laurencia Govender** has been **awarded an NRF Y2 Rating**, a prestigious recognition of her **excellence in research and significant contributions to advancing scientific knowledge**. This accolade reflects her growing national and international standing as an emerging researcher of distinction in her field.
- **Dr Jessica Paken** – Awarded an **NRF C2 Rating**, a distinguished recognition that affirms her status as an **established researcher** with a sustained record of high-quality and impactful scholarship in her field.
- **Dr Naimah Khan** – Appointed as an **Honorary Professor** at **Wenzhou Medical University**, China, in recognition of her international academic collaboration and contribution to health sciences education.
- **Professor Khathutshelo Percy Mashige** - Awarded an **NRF B3 Rating**, recognised as a **recipient of the Honorary Healthcare Leader Award** by **Africa Health Excellence**, and ranked **among the top ten optometry researchers in Africa by research impact**. These honours reflect his distinguished contributions to vision science, academic leadership, and the advancement of healthcare across the continent.

Promotions in the School of Health Sciences

- **Professor Jeanne Grace** – Promoted to **Full Professor**, in recognition of her distinguished academic achievements, leadership, and impactful contributions to scholarship and the advancement of her discipline.
- **Professor Deshini Naidoo** – Promoted to **Full Professor**, acknowledging her outstanding record in research, teaching, and service to the University and broader professional community.
- **Dr Euphemia Mbali Mhlongo**- Promoted to **Associate Professor** acknowledging her contribution to the advancement of Nursing education internationally.
- **Dr Debbie Fewster** – Promoted to **Senior Lecturer**, in recognition of her significant academic contributions and commitment to excellence in teaching and learning.
- **Dr December Mpanza** – Promoted to **Senior Lecturer**, acknowledging his notable achievements in academic scholarship, community engagement, and contribution to professional education.
- **Dr Thev Gurayah** – Promoted to **Senior Lecturer**, in recognition of her academic accomplishments, teaching excellence, and growing research profile.

School of Medicine Highlights

The School successfully hosted and achieved **full HPCSA accreditation** for various postgraduate programmes. This milestone affirms the School's commitment to quality clinical training, academic excellence, and compliance with national regulatory standards.

Research Achievements

- **Professor Refiloe Masekela** received the prestigious American Thoracic Society (ATS) World Lung Health Award, recognising her exceptional contributions to global respiratory health research and advocacy and also received an **NRF B-rating**. Further, **Professor Refiloe Masekela** was appointed **Dean of the School of Medicine** in July 2025, marking a significant leadership advancement for the College and institution.
- **Professor Nombulelo Magula** continued to lead impactful translational research, particularly her **groundbreaking work in innovative hypertension care in rural South Africa**, strengthening evidence-based approaches for underserved communities.
- The School celebrated a major postgraduate milestone with **Professor Basil Enicker**, Acting Head of Neurosurgery, who was awarded his PhD, further advancing clinical neuroscience research capacity.
- **Professor Alain G. Assounga**, Head of the Nephrology at the Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine, who has been awarded a prestigious **Certificate of Honour by the Congolese Society of Nephrology**. The accolade recognises his outstanding contributions to the establishment of haemodialysis services in the Republic of the Congo and his ongoing support in strengthening nephrology in Brazzaville.

At the **African Health Excellence Awards**, several members of the School were recognised:

- **Professor Motshedisi Sebitloane** received an Excellence Award for his outstanding clinical and academic contributions.
- **Victoria Mxenge Hospital** was honoured as the Best Health Institution, reflecting excellence in clinical service and training.
- **Professor Ncoza Dlova** received recognition for her continued leadership and contributions to dermatology and health sciences.
- **Dr Nombuso Mathe** from Ophthalmology received an Honorary Award for service excellence and contributions to eye health.
- **Professor Themba G. Ginindza** was appointed to the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Prevention and Control of Cancer.

Promotions in the School of Medicine

- Professor Refiloe Masekela- Full Professor
- Professor Len Marais – Full Professor
- Professor Tim Hardcastle – Full Professor
- Professor Themba Ginindza- Full Professor
- Professor Zaza Ndhlovu- Full Professor
- Professor Mergan Naidoo- Full Professor
- Dr Nompumelelo Mkhwanazi- Senior Lecturer
- Dr Siyabonga Dlamini- Senior Lecturer

Looking Ahead

As we enter the new year, the College stands on firmer foundations. Restructuring has brought clarity, Project Renewal has activated systems for growth, and our people continue to demonstrate resilience and excellence. With renewed focus, we will intensify postgraduate recruitment, strengthen research productivity, and expand fundraising and partnership efforts to secure a sustainable future.

In Closing

To every member of the CHS community—thank you for your dedication, adaptability and unwavering commitment. Together, we are building a College that is not only academically strong, but strategically positioned to lead health innovation on the African continent.

I wish you and your loved ones a safe, restful and restorative festive season.

Warm regards

Professor Busisiwe Ncama

Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Head

College of Health Sciences