

FIRST QUARTER NEWSLETTER 2026

**"This is not just the start of
your degree, it's the beginning
of who you're becoming".**

**EBET Faculty Meet & Greet -
Lindokuhle Gwengula**





MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DEAN

Prof Sudesh Rathilal

It is my pleasure to share this inaugural edition of our 2026 1st Quarter Faculty Newsletter, highlighting the continued progress, resilience, and achievements within the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology.

As we move further into the academic year, I am especially honoured to serve in the role of Executive Dean, having assumed this position in February 2026. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff and students for the warm welcome and support during this transition. I look forward to working collaboratively with all of you as we continue to build on the strong foundation of excellence within our faculty.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to excellence in learning and teaching, impactful research, and meaningful engagement with industry and communities. Our students and staff continue to demonstrate remarkable dedication, resilience, and innovation. These are qualities that strengthen both the reputation and impact of our faculty in a rapidly evolving higher education landscape.

This period has been marked by several important milestones. From ongoing student recruitment initiatives and school outreach programmes to notable research advancements and postgraduate successes. These achievements reflect our collective effort to position the faculty as a leader in developing future-ready graduates and contributing meaningfully to society.

As we navigate the demands of the academic year, we are also reminded of the importance of collaboration and adaptability. Strengthening partnerships, both internally and externally remains a key priority as we seek to enhance our academic offerings, expand research opportunities, and ensure that our programmes remain responsive to the needs of industry and the communities we serve.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all staff members for your continued hard work, professionalism, and commitment. Your contributions are integral to our ability to deliver on our mandate and uphold the standards of excellence associated with our institution.

To our students, I encourage you to remain focused, engaged, and proactive in your academic journey. Make full use of the support structures available to you and continue striving for excellence in all that you do. Your success remains at the centre of our efforts as a faculty.

Looking ahead, we will continue to build momentum by fostering innovation, strengthening collaboration, and creating opportunities that benefit both our students and the broader society. Together, we can ensure that our faculty continues to grow towards being the first choice for students and partners.

I trust you will find this edition informative and inspiring.



South African Association of Campus Health Services (SAACHS) .

Advancing conversations at the intersection of technology and healthcare, Prof Kerry-Lynn Thomson, Director of the School of IT and Director of the Centre for Research in Information and Cyber Security (CRICS), together with Prof Darelle van Greunen, Director of the Centre for Community Technologies (CCT), were invited as guest speakers at the South African Association of Campus Health Services (SAACHS).

Prof Thomson delivered a presentation on "Cyber Safety and Digital Well-being," highlighting the importance of responsible digital engagement and safeguarding users in an increasingly connected world. Prof van Greunen presented on "AI and the Technology-Enabled Healthcare Worker," offering insights into how artificial intelligence is reshaping healthcare delivery and enhancing the capabilities of healthcare practitioners.

Their contributions not only showcased the Faculty's expertise but also reinforced the University's position as a thought leader at the intersection of technology, healthcare, and digital safety. Furthermore, their participation strengthened strategic partnerships with key stakeholders across the higher education and campus health sectors.



School of Information Technology First Year Orientation

On 3 February 2026, the School of Information Technology proudly hosted its First-Year Orientation, warmly welcoming the newest cohort into the School. The Director, Prof Kerry-Lynn Thomson, together with the Heads of Department, addressed the incoming class, offering words of encouragement and setting the tone for the academic journey ahead.

The programme was further enriched by the presence of Emthonjeni Student Wellness, who shared valuable insights on student wellbeing, reinforcing the importance of mental, emotional, and physical health. Library Services also engaged with attendees, equipping them with guidance on accessing essential academic resources to support their success.

This orientation marked the beginning of an exciting journey, as students take their first steps toward becoming future innovators in the field of Information Technology.



Building Confidence in the Digital Lab Environment

On 4–5 February 2026, the School of Information Technology hosted Lab Orientation sessions for first-year students, aimed at equipping them with the essential skills to confidently navigate campus computer laboratories.

The sessions provided practical guidance on operating PCs, accessing academic systems, and making effective use of digital resources to support their academic journey.

Recognizing that the transition to university introduces new technologies and environments, the School remains committed to ensuring that first-year students feel supported, confident, and ready to succeed from the outset.



BIFIP Kristian Beckman Award 2026

Prof Rossouw von Solms, Emeritus Distinguished Professor in the School of Information Technology, will be awarded the prestigious IFIP Kristian Beckman Award for 2026. This international award recognises individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the development of information security.

With an illustrious academic career spanning over four decades, Prof von Solms has dedicated his work to advancing the fields of computer security, information security, cybersecurity, and security governance. His contributions to research, education, and practice have significantly shaped the discipline both locally and globally.

His scholarly impact includes more than 250 research publications, accompanied by a strong citation record and an impressive h-index. He has also been ranked as the global #1 Highly Ranked Scholar by ScholarGPS in both Information Security and Security Management, underscoring his influence in the field.

In addition to his academic achievements, Prof von Solms has made notable contributions to professional and organisational structures within information security, particularly through his involvement in IFIP TC11. His longstanding commitment to the field has previously been recognised with the esteemed IFIP Fellow Award.

Prof von Solms will deliver a keynote address at the IFIP SEC Conference in Perth, Australia, in June, where he will formally receive this distinguished award.

Exploring Innovation at the ITS Integrator User Group Conference

From 16–18 March 2026, PASS staff from the School of Information Technology attended the ITS Integrator User Group Conference at Sun City.

The event brought together higher education professionals and industry experts to explore how ERP innovations can drive institutional progress in the digital era. Through keynote sessions, case studies, and collaborative discussions, our team gained valuable insights into human-centred systems, smarter workflows, and data-driven decision-making.

As ITS Integrator celebrates 40 years, the conference underscored the importance of evolving digital ecosystems to enhance the experiences of both students and staff across institutions.



Digital Health Symposium

On 11 March, our Nelson Mandela University Centre for Community Technologies (CCT) hosted an insightful Digital Health Symposium, bringing together thought leaders, researchers, and industry experts to explore the future of healthcare in Africa.

From discussions on trusted digital health wallets to implementing connected health systems in South Africa, the symposium sparked meaningful conversations around technology, governance, and equitable healthcare solutions.

HOD-Led & Student Wellness Walk

In collaboration with Emthonjeni, the School of IT Heads of Department joined students for a 3.3 km Wellness Walk along the picturesque Grysbok Trail at Nelson Mandela University.

The initiative provided an opportunity for academic leadership and students to connect outside the classroom, fostering meaningful conversation and promoting holistic well-being. The scenic trail offered the perfect backdrop for reflection, engagement, and a shared commitment to wellness.

Events like this showcase the power of collaboration and the positive impact it has on both personal and academic growth, reinforcing the School's dedication to nurturing a supportive and balanced student experience.



MICT SETA National Skills Challenge Hackathon

Our talented School of IT students recently showcased their skills at the MICT SETA National Skills Challenge Hackathon, hosted by Propella — and they delivered outstanding results!

1st Place
3rd Place

These impressive achievements have earned them a place in the finals in Gauteng, where they will represent not only the School of IT, but also the Faculty of EBET and Nelson Mandela University on the national stage.

A special thank you goes to Mr Bongani Mngaza for accompanying and supporting our students throughout the competition. We are incredibly proud of our students for demonstrating innovation, teamwork, and excellence in the tech space.





ECDOT MOU / Research Symposium 9-11 March 2026

The ECDOT MOU and Research Symposium, held from 9-11 March 2026, provided a valuable platform for strengthening collaboration between government, academia, and industry. Through the formalisation of partnerships and the sharing of research insights, the symposium highlighted the critical role of innovation and applied research in addressing transport and infrastructure challenges in the Eastern Cape. The engagement fostered meaningful dialogue among stakeholders, encouraging the development of practical, sustainable solutions while also creating opportunities for student involvement and future research initiatives aligned with regional development priorities.

“Collaboration between government, academia, and industry is essential in transforming research into practical solutions that drive sustainable development.”



Mr Andile Fani
ECDOT Accounting Officer

SA Innovation Week 2026



eNtsa participated in the inaugural SA Innovation Week, held at the Johannesburg Expo Centre, where it showcased its advanced engineering services and technology station SME support offered to industry. Hosted by the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), the event aimed to drive innovation, foster collaboration, and transform South Africa's innovation landscape. As part of the programme, eNtsa presented its proprietary WeldCore® technology, highlighting key innovations and developments within the power generation and petrochemical sectors. The platform provided an opportunity to demonstrate eNtsa's role in advancing cutting-edge engineering solutions and supporting industry growth through innovation.

Sharing eNtsa's passion for Research, Science, Technology & Innovation.



eNtsa Director of Engineering Engagement, Julien de Klerk, was invited to speak at Namibia's National Stakeholder Workshop, focused on reviewing progress of the NDP6 Research, Science, Technology and Innovation (RSTI) sector. During the engagement, he presented on eNtsa's approach to innovation, unpacking key opportunities, challenges, and successes in a compelling talk titled "From Ideas to Impact: Leveraging Engineering Innovation at Institutions of Higher Learning (Universities and TVETs) for Economic Impact through RSTI." The workshop was hosted by Dino Ballotti, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture (MEIYSAC). This engagement reflects eNtsa's growing role in shaping regional innovation discourse, as well as its continued commitment to advancing impactful engineering solutions in collaboration with industry partners and stakeholders across South Africa and beyond.

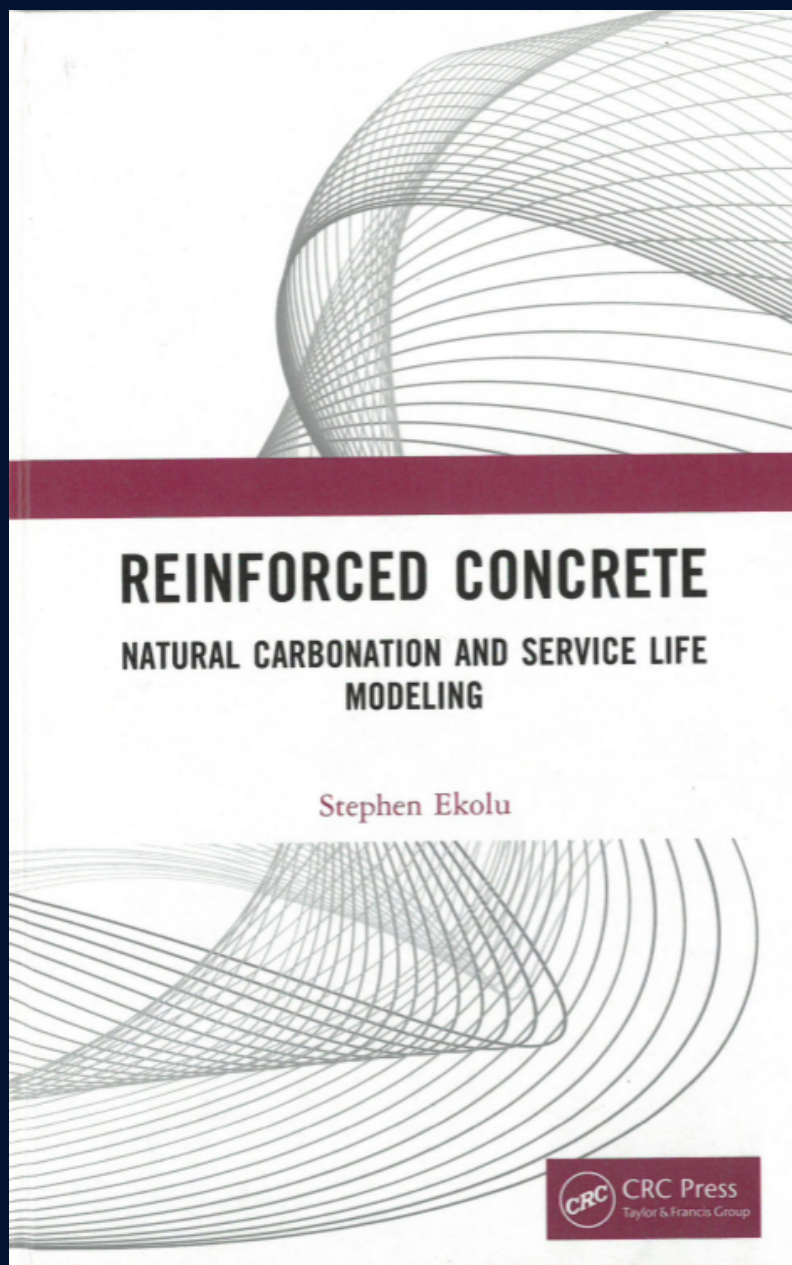
Training delivered in Buffalo City Municipality (East London)

eNtsa, in collaboration with the Institute of Advanced Tooling (IAT), successfully hosted a series of short technical training courses for participants from the automotive component sector and the academic community within the Eastern Cape's key manufacturing region. The programme focused on strengthening practical engineering capability through hands-on training in Welding Technology, CNC Operation, 3D Printing, and Engineering Measurement Tools.

This initiative reflects a strong partnership between Nelson Mandela University and Walter Sisulu University, contributing directly to a more resilient regional skills pipeline. By supporting Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers, WSU lecturers, and engineering students, the programme is building critical technical competencies that feed into and strengthen the local manufacturing ecosystem.

Importantly, this work is made possible through the continued support of Automotive Industry Development Centre Eastern Cape (AIDC Eastern Cape), the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), and the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI). Their investment enables high-impact, practical interventions that strengthen industry, empower universities, and grow future-ready talent within the Eastern Cape.





Among the critical adverse impacts of climate change is the corrosion-related deterioration and reduced service life of infrastructure. Stephen Ekolu, Professor of Civil Engineering at the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology (EBET) at Nelson Mandela University, has contributed to addressing this challenge through his recently published book, *Reinforced Concrete: Natural Carbonation and Service Life Modelling*. The publication draws on the growing global understanding of anthropogenic climate change, particularly the rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂), and examines its impact on the durability of concrete structures. It further translates this knowledge into practical design provisions for improved infrastructure resilience.

Professor Ekolu, recognised among the world's top 2% of scientists (Stanford University / Elsevier), specialises in concrete materials and structures. His extensive research spanning over 15 years led to the development of the Natural Carbonation Prediction (NCP) model, which forms the foundation of the book. With over 250 peer-reviewed publications, NRF Category C rating, and professional registration as an engineer (PrEng), his work continues to make a significant impact in both academia and industry.

The book presents key theoretical concepts and governing mathematical principles, developed into a practical engineering methodology for the service life design of reinforced concrete. It serves as a valuable resource for academic research and teaching, as well as for practising civil engineers and built environment professionals in the construction industry. The publication is available through CRC Press, part of the Taylor & Francis Group, in both hardcover and electronic formats.



GALLERY





GALLERY

