



# Fourth UNESCO Research Chair Launched

...Where Culture Meets Technology



Hon Deputy Minister Dino Ballotti and Prof Heike Winschiers-Theophilus brought the fun to the official launch of the new UNESCO Chair - literally lifting chairs to celebrate the Chair.

“Indigenous communities are not only recipients of technology; they are architects of it.” With these powerful words, Hon Dino Ballotti, Deputy Minister of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture (MEIYSAC), set the tone at the official launch of the UNESCO Chair in Digital Technology Design with Indigenous People, held at NUST.

At the core of this groundbreaking initiative is what Ballotti described as “CUL-TECH”, the fusion of culture and technology. Under the leadership of Prof Heike Winschiers-Theophilus, the Chair focuses on human-computer interaction research that empowers Indigenous communities to preserve, shape, and share their cultural heritage on their own terms.

“Without their active participation in the design, development, and governance of Artificial Intelligence systems, we risk perpetuating existing inequalities,” remarked Prof Colin Stanley, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Partnerships.

This Chair marks a significant departure from traditional top-down innovation models. Prof Heike highlighted that instead of creating technology for communities, her and her team are co-creating with them, ensuring that each solution is inclusive,

ethical, and firmly grounded in cultural identity. The impact is already tangible in communities like Otjisa and Donkerbos. “We were starting to forget our culture,” shared Uariaike Mbinge, a community elder from Otjisa. “Prof Heike and her team helped us use technology to keep our culture alive.”

What makes this initiative even more remarkable is the depth of its collaboration. Community members have co-authored peer-reviewed journal articles alongside NUST researchers, embodying the true spirit of co-creation and research equity.

As the fourth UNESCO Chair hosted at NUST, out of the five in Namibia, this initiative reinforces the University's commitment to inclusive innovation, cultural preservation, and global leadership in ethical technology design.



## Science for the People

...Faculty of Health, Natural Resources and Applied Sciences Showcases Research

It was a chilly July morning with the cold winter flexing its muscles, but this did not deter the scores of staff and students from filling up the auditorium to attend the Faculty of Health, Natural Resources and Applied Sciences (FHNRAS) Research Day. The theme of the day was “A Decade of Eminence: Celebrating Education, Science and Technology for Development”, a befitting message as the University celebrates a decade of existence.

The research conducted by the Faculty reaches beyond the lab and into the lives of people, communities, and ecosystems across Namibia and beyond.

“We are not only responding to Namibia's most pressing challenges, we are actively shaping solutions. This work supports policy, advances science and technology, and drives real impact aligned with Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals,” noted Prof Colin Stanley, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Partnerships.

The FHNRAS is addressing critical national

and global challenges through research focused on public health, sustainable development, and technological innovation.

Projects include improving health outcomes through environmental monitoring and digital health systems, enhancing agriculture and food security via indigenous knowledge, and advancing marine research to support the Blue Economy.

Efforts in green energy, climate resilience, and bioinformatics are driving sustainable solutions, while modelling tools aid in decision-making across health, security, and finance sectors.



Prof Colin Stanley (fifth from left) and Prof Anicia Peters (sixth from left) pictured with some of the researchers.



NUST Interim Council Members.

## Council and Senate Engagement

The NUST Interim Council recently engaged Senate, focusing on key issues, including free higher education. The engagement aimed to reflect on the distinct roles and responsibilities of each body and to explore how their functions can best

complement one another in the interest of the University. The engagement was attended by the Chairperson of the NUST Council, Dr Leake Hangala, alongside fellow Council members and members of Senate.

## Research and Innovation Matters Podcast on NUST FM

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FEATURING:

Professor Heike Winschiers-Theophilus

Topic: Multiversal Knowledge Through Indigenous Participation