Making DREAMS come true and empowering girls through STEM

Through the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences (FHAS), NUST is providing supplementary educational support to various teachers and selected students across the country, in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subject areas. This is part of the USAID-funded DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, Safe) project funded by PEPFAR through USAID, in which the University is a sub-partner.

The DREAMS project is implemented by Project HOPE Namibia as the prime recipient, together with Star for Life, LifeLine/ChildLine, NUST IntraHealth and Project HOPE US. DREAMS aims to avert new HIV infections amongst Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) between the ages of 10 - 24.

NUST supports DREAMS AGYW with educational support to various STEM subjects from NUST, which is an additional example of capacity building and as the main constituent in many forms of plaster, manufacturing of cement and biochar from wood of encroached bushes.

Gypsum minerals for the BUSH research assistant, Johannes Pius (left), hands over gypsum to Mareike Voigts of Krumhuk Farm.

A senior lecturer Yapo Aboua from the Department of Marketing and Logistics, commented on her experience with the PGCHE saying: "I have gained so much insight the past few weeks and I feel I have grown both personally and professionally. This includes learning about the importance of active learning, reflective learning, and many other student-centred approaches." Dr Julia Indongo, from the Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, said: "The programme reminded me that my responsibility as a lecturer is not to give students the information but to facilitate learning by creating a learning environment where both the students and lecturer will interact, share their experience and knowledge."

The programme, offered by the Faculty of Human Sciences, in collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) meets the needs of staff new to teaching in higher education as well as experienced lecturers who wish to advance their current teaching skills. This three-semester programme that includes: Teaching, Learning and Assessment; Curriculum Design and Development; and Technology Integration in Teaching and Learning.

The programme is fully online which has led to deeper engagement in learning activities and ownership of the learning process. Selma Kambonde, from the Department of Marketing and Logistics, commented on her experience with the PGCE saying: "I have gained so much insight the past few weeks and I feel I have grown both personally and professionally. This includes learning about the importance of active learning, reflective learning, and many other student-centred approaches."

Dr Edosa Omoregie, Senior Lecturer, Biology, FHAS, is leading the NUST Team of four core members. He said: "Empowering disadvantaged women and girls in science means developing the community at large which aligns to the NUST vision of remaining relevant at national level."

Thus far, a double-layer impact approach of educational empowerment of the AGYW has been implemented, which includes: assessing the needs around STEM education at the participating schools; building capacity by training teachers in their identified areas; providing additional tutoring; and creating STEM e-learning studying hubs/kitchen spaces to enable further learning experiences.
The fifth edition of the NUST Annual Programming Competition recently took place virtually, under the theme: “Creating a knowledge based society through reasoning about computer programs for the 4IR.” The Competition is an annual event, which began in 2015 as an initiative by the Faculty of Computing and Informatics (FCI), to create awareness among schools on the importance of programming and problem-solving.

It aims to encourage learners to take up studies in the computing field. The competition also targets tertiary students in Namibia. This year, the event attracted 83 participants of which 55 were high school learners. The schools represented were Acacia High; Windhoek Technical High; Delta; St Georges Diocesan; Concordia; St Paul’s College; Rocky Crest High, and Deutsche Höhere Privatschule. The high school learners were coached over several weeks by their teachers, as well as the FCI staff and students. Thirty-three (33) participants were students from three tertiary institutions: International University of Management (IUM), University of Namibia (UNAM), and NUST who competed in the Tertiary Institution Category.

Mobile Telecommunications Limited (MTC) sponsored this prestigious event. The winners walked away with prizes which included tablets, Wi-Fi devices, hard drives, wireless speakers and N$3,000 for the winning team, N$5,000 for the first runner-up and N$3,000 for the second runner-up. The overall winners of the fifth NUST Annual Programming Competition in the High School Category are St George’s Diocesan, followed by Delta and St Paul’s College occupying the third place. In the tertiary institution’s category, the winners were IUM, followed by NUST in the second and third categories.

Scenes from the 2020 NUST Endurance Challenge

The Human Resources Department at NUST hosted various activities as part of this year’s wellness initiative. The Challenge, which ends on 07 November, consists of 5km, 10km and 21km weekly fun walks and runs, games and cycling, amongst others. Staff members have been grouped into six main teams and the overall winners will be announced at the end of the three week engagement.