

VICE CHANCELLOR'S DISTINGUISHED AWARD
FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2020

Ms. Mapula Maponya
Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities
Allan Gray Centre for Leadership Ethics

Ms. Maponya, has shown, through her work, how service-learning has catalysed important transformational work within the department of philosophy, meaningfully contributed to the knowledge production and dissemination process within the discipline, and has served as a vehicle for the induction and training of ethically engaged students.

Ms. Maponya is a lecturer in the AGCLE and coordinates the year-long service-learning component of *IiNtetho zoBomi: Conversations About Life 101 and 102*—the flagship, engaged ethics course run by the AGCLE and housed in the Philosophy Department. Her passion for education and commitment to community engagement with a decade of experience shines through her work. Ms. Maponya joined the AGCLE to design the service-learning course that led to this award. Her development, and ongoing facilitation of the service-learning component of IZ has been exceptional, with her and her team developing a deeply meaningful and committed relationship with the AGCLE's community partner—Archie Mbolekwa Primary School. 280 IZ students, work annually with Archie's learners, making it one of the largest, long running service-learning programmes at Rhodes.

The course started in 2016 and suffered many changes, overcoming the multiple obstacles that service-learning courses can have. Ms. Maponya was able to not only continued with the course but to develop it further by listening to the community partners, the learners and the students. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Maponya and her team succeeded in adapting to the changes, being responsive to the community partner's needs and what the world circumstances allowed.

The impact of this inspirational service-learning course is seen on the university students, school learners, and the school. Students often remark on the impact of service-learning on their ethical development in their reflective journals. The school learners have shown and reported significant growth not only in terms of their English reading, writing and

comprehension skills, but also in terms of their confidence and public speaking. The school is highly invested in the programme—including the principal, teachers, parents and learners. Indeed, the principal of Archie Mbolekwa has been so inspired by the service-learning aspect of IiNtetho zoBomi that he has recently registered at RU to study further towards a postgraduate degree in education.

“Miss Maponya is a true community leader; she is passionate about the Grahamstown community more especially the previously disadvantaged. Her aim is to use education to change the circle of poverty our learner and their parents are experiencing. Ms Maponya is an asset to our community. Her dedication and accompanying zeal to what she does makes her tackle challenges with great enthusiasm.”

Ms. Maponya herself has also been impacted by this journey. She has deeply invested in the Makhanda community for over 5 years and won the coveted Rhodes Volunteer of the Year Award in 2015. She is currently finishing her PhD on service-learning using IiNtetho zoBomi as a case study. Mapula personifies what community engagement at its best, bring together service-learning and research together, contributing to the scholarship of engagement and advancing the service-learning. The development of this service-learning course in philosophy has broader and deeply meaningful implications for the ways that philosophy is taught at universities, and for how future academics come to understand the relationship between any discipline – even those previously considered to be at odds with the principles and practice of community engagement – and the broader transformational goals of higher education.

