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UCT working to address student wellness needs

In recent years, mental health conditions across the University of Cape Town's (UCT) student population have increased markedly, resulting in more students needing assistance for longer periods of time. In an effort to raise more funds to address student wellness needs, the university will host the inaugural UCT Day on Friday, 6 October.

UCT Day is an opportunity for alumni, staff and students to demonstrate collective commitment to UCT's fundraising efforts by supporting one of the [four student fundraising causes](#), including student wellness. Members of the public can also make an [online donation](#) to support these causes. The other initiatives are around student fees, gender-based violence and UCT students food sovereignty.

The leading clinical presentation by students accessing Student Wellness Service (SWS) in 2021 were anxiety and depression. Contributing factors include the impact of COVID-19 on family income, bereavement and the academic pressure associated with remote study during the lockdown period.

"Expanding the current Student Wellness Service will enable us to provide access to a lot more students in a timely fashion, support their academic journey, and enable academic success," said Dr Memory Muturiki, director of UCT's SWS.

Mental and emotional well-being are paramount to success, said Muturiki. "UCT is working hard to expand the raft of SWS programmes addressing students' current and emerging wellness needs. Expanding UCT's SWS programme will give students faster access to mental health services and increase their likelihood of academic success."

Dr Kathy van der Westhuizen, medical officer at UCT's SWS, said: "I have experienced the increasing burden of mental health illnesses on our students. We have found that it really affects their ability to succeed, so we try to intervene. On an average day, three or four of my consults have to do with mental health."

The UCT Day programme will see a variety of events on campus starting at 12:00. Events include live music by the UCT Radio; a Zumba session at 12:00; the UCT executive challenge at 15:30, featuring members of the senior leadership team who will compete in a relay race; wheelchair rugby; and an outdoor movie experience hosted by Sunshine Cinema from 18:00 to 20:00.

There is also a planned three sports challenges and teams drawn from across the university will battle against each other. These are 5km walkathon; five-a-side soccer and the UCT Amazing Race powered by BMW.

On the day, the UCT Libraries will host tours at 12:00, 13:00 and 14:00 in the Jagger Library and Birkdale House; and the UCT Campus Sustainability Guided Walking Tours on 5 and 6 October from 12:00 to 13:30.

- [Visit the UCT Day events page for the full schedule of exciting activities.](#)
- [Support the UCT Day student fundraising initiatives.](#)

ENDS

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