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## UCT professor leads Faculty of Commerce to a new era of research and social impact



Associate Professor Nkosivile Madinga

Photo: Je'nine May

Associate Professor Nkosivile Madinga's deep commitment to addressing social issues through research has been a defining feature of his career. Now, as the Deputy Dean: Research, Internationalisation and Socially Engaged Scholarship in the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Faculty of Commerce, a role he assumed on 1 January 2024, he is set to inspire a new generation of commerce researchers.

Recalling his early ambitions, Madinga shared a unique childhood inspiration. "I was very interested in advertising. The funny part was that I was inspired by the character James Motsamai from the soapie *Muvhango*. He was a marketing manager for one of the companies in the show and I liked him so much that I wanted to follow in his footsteps," he said.

Though the primetime drama *Muvhango* sparked young Madinga's interest in marketing, it was not his only influence. His fascination with how advertising shapes perceptions and drives decisions fuelled his passion for the field.

At the time, Madinga recalls that there was also a vehicle advert that featured a talking dog and "I was concerned because it didn't speak to my demographics. With advertising's power to change people's perception, there are some ethical issues that need to be taken into consideration when you're creating work. That's what made me more interested in the strategic side of advertising rather than the creative and, because of that, I chose to study marketing," he explained.

Madinga followed his bachelor's degree with an honours and master's. While working as a tutor, he discovered that his true passion for the field would be best realised through a career in academia.

### **Swift but steady progress**

One of the key factors in Madinga's appointment as the deputy dean is his impressive publications record, which reflects his deep commitment to academic research. His involvement in research began long before it became a requirement of his position, driven by his dedication to the field.

"When Nkosivile started with us, even though he'd been at a private institution where research isn't a requirement, he had an outstanding publication record. Certainly, on his research output, he was hitting metrics that exceeded the expectation of a lecturer, the rank at which his post was advertised," remarked Faculty of Commerce dean, Professor Suki Goodman.

According to Madinga, his efforts were driven by his desire to generate novel and insightful data that can help shape decisions and responses to social and economic issues. "Research excites me because it generates new knowledge and insights that shape what people, companies and even the government do. It affects how we as a society respond to social issues because to make informed decisions, people need information. I find that generation of knowledge really fascinating," he explained.

Madinga's dedication and hard work were rewarded when he applied for and secured the part-time lecturing role in the Faculty of Commerce at the end of 2017. "I got the appointment letter in December 2017 and it was the best December I've ever had," he recalled. "I'd always had the dream of joining a traditional university but I'd never thought that I would join one of the most prestigious academic institutions in Africa."

When changes occurred within the School of Management Studies, a full-time position became available, and Madinga seized the opportunity. Over the next few years, he advanced steadily, becoming a senior lecturer, head of the marketing section and eventually an associate professor.

### **A research powerhouse**

When Associate Professor Sure Mataramvura's term as deputy dean for research and internationalisation ended in 2023, the faculty sought a successor who could sustain and further enhance its research profile. In this crucial moment, Madinga emerged as the ideal candidate, thanks to his remarkable research contributions and outstanding leadership within the section of marketing studies.

"What he's been able to do across his time as a lecturer is produce research at an alarmingly good rate, not only in quantity but also in quality. The journals that he's published and the

conferences that he's been involved in have just gotten better and better," Professor Goodman said. "It's important that a deputy dean of research walks the talk. It gives a level of legitimacy and authority to the role."

While Madinga's research is undoubtedly extensive, its true value lies in its depth and relevance. Much of his work has concentrated on social and economic issues, exploring how marketing and advertising can create a more equitable society in South Africa and beyond.

His research addresses real challenges communities face and spans various topics, including financial literacy, entrepreneurship, LGBTQI+ consumer behaviour, employees' psychological well-being, and the application of technology in marketing.

The deputy dean is passionate about conducting research that shapes consumer behaviour, guides company actions, and informs policy, all to make a tangible impact on society. His significant contributions to the academic community have recently earned him the prestigious recognition of becoming a National Research Foundation (NRF)-rated researcher.

This commitment to addressing social issues while generating insights that provoke discussion and drive change was key in expanding the deputy dean role to include socially engaged scholarship.

"We have a responsibility to do research that doesn't just sit on the shelves of libraries," said Goodman. "We need research that informs debates and impacts policy and decision-making. Nkosivile's work fits in with how we are trying to reframe the portfolio to encourage socially responsive scholarship that can be broadly read and digested."

### **Unlocking research potential**

Although his experience and interests have given him a significant advantage, Madinga emphasised that his primary motivation has been the opportunity to collaborate with other scholars in an environment where research is both valued and encouraged. "Collaborating with other scholars and conducting research in a conducive environment where your efforts are supported and funded is really rewarding – especially at UCT, there are so many avenues through which research is encouraged and great leaders to help you along the way," he said.

Goodman highlighted that Madinga's ambition to collaborate and elevate others made him the ideal candidate for the expanded deputy dean role. "One of his standout assets is his generosity in the space. If you look at his publication history, many of his colleagues are co-authors on his papers and I think that speaks to a very particular kind of research approach – collegial and mentorship-focused. That's an invaluable feature for a research leader to have," concluded Goodman.

*Story by Nicole Forrest, UCT News.*

**ENDS**

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