



**26 March 2021**

## **UCT leadership pays tribute to lives lost due to COVID-19 on anniversary of the lockdown**

VIEW: <a href="#">A video of the commemoration session held by the UCT executive.</a>	VISIT: <a href="#">UCT's website to view our commemoration of a year since lockdown.</a>
READ: <a href="#">The full communication by Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng.</a>	VIEW: <a href="#">The university's lockdown anniversary photo essay.</a>

In commemorating the first anniversary of the COVID-19 lockdown, the University of Cape Town executive held a short ceremony on Thursday, 25 March.

The executive, led by Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, observed a moment of silence and lit candles to remember the members of the UCT community lost to the deadly virus (and all lives lost during this period).

Phakeng said: "Undoubtedly the past year has been characterised by immeasurable loss, uncertainty, learning and unlearning, and resilience.

"We salute the collective efforts of all our extraordinary staff, students and alumni who remained steadfast and focused in helping the university navigate one of its hardest times. This includes our experts and scientists who were in the frontline clinical work – whether it was treating patients, advising government through various ministerial advisory committees, or playing an active role in research initiatives and spearheading scientific efforts in the clinical trials for effective COVID-19 vaccines."

She also lauded the university's campus essential workers, such as cleaning staff and Campus Protection Services officers, as well as all staff who have been working in the background to support students and to ensure that UCT ran efficiently, and UCT's COVID-19 Coordinating Committee (CCC), which is tasked with continued close monitoring of any

developments around COVID-19 working in partnership with the relevant spheres and agencies of government.

Professor Phakeng said UCT was fortunate that there were valuable and effective digital resources at the beginning of the pandemic, and that members of the teaching staff were able to adapt to remote teaching.

“It was not perfect, but it was effective under difficult circumstances. Many had to stop their research work to adjust their teaching. We are continually learning valuable lessons that we are applying to the 2021 academic year.”

South Africa’s Sisonke clinical trial of the investigational single-dose Janssen COVID-19 vaccine candidate began on 17 February 2021, at Khayelitsha Hospital, with President Cyril Ramaphosa, Dr Zweli Mkhize and various frontline healthcare workers among the first to receive the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine. Professor Linda-Gail Bekker and Professor Graeme Meintjes, of UCT’s Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine in the Faculty of Health Sciences, were present for the auspicious occasion, and both played leading roles in the J&J vaccine trials.

“I encourage all of us to remain vigilant, as the virus remains a reality. It is everybody’s responsibility to adhere to the COVID-19 regulations and protocols of social distancing, hand hygiene and wearing of masks in public, for the safety of all,” concluded Phakeng.

***ENDS***

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