**CITATION: KHAYA MFENYANA**

Khaya Mfenyana is a leader in family medicine and a pioneer in medical education in South Africa for championing problem and community-based learning.

He graduated with a MBChB at the University of Natal in 1977 and a Masters degree in Family Medicine at what was then the Medical University of South Africa, or Medunsa, in 1984. Four years later he created the Department of Family Medicine at Umtata General Hospital and the University of Transkei (known as Unitra).

A professor since 1989, he was Acting Vice-Chancellor & Principal of Unitra from May to September 2002 and became Deputy Vice-Chancellor in 2005.

In July of that year, as part of national higher education restructuring in South Africa, Unitra merged with the Border and Eastern Cape technikons to become Walter Sisulu University. Mfenyana was appointed its Interim Vice-Principal, a position he held until December 2007.

He became the first Substantive Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences. In August 2012 the university was placed under administration and his role was expanded to assist in the office of the vice-chancellor.

In February 2014 he became Interim Vice-Chancellor of Walter Sisulu University. When Mfenyana retired three years ago, he was hailed as a ‘’colossal figure’’ who had dedicated more than 28 years to its growth and development.

Despite being such a heavyweight in the medical field, Mfenyana became a doctor almost by chance.

Born in Lady Frere in rural Eastern Cape on the 3rd of February 1945, he matriculated from the legendary Lovedale High School. He did a two-year teaching diploma at the University of Fore Hare and taught maths and science at Rhoda High School in Cofimvaba in the Eastern Cape for a year. He then returned to Fort Hare to do a BSc.

Passionate to become a scientist because he enjoyed ‘’being challenged to think and to solve problems’’, he and his peers looked down on medical students as they felt they were learning by rote and were not real scientists. So he set his mind on doing Chemistry Honours, and successfully applied to do so.

However, before he had even graduated with his BSC, a friend suggested he apply for medicine. And so he did, but went ahead with his plan to be a scientist.

In January his trip to university to begin Honours was delayed when he had to visit a doctor about a stomach ache. On his return, there was a telegram accepting him to medical school at what was then the University of Natal. He deliberated about it and over a period of six hours, decided to do medicine.

He thought about what his father had said about not too many people doing medicine. And how the only doctor he knew was in the nearest town and they saw him only occasionally.

He found the first years of studying medicine a bit dull but by the time he reached the clinical years of his studies he realised he hadn’t made a mistake. From his fourth year he started holiday work at a nearby mission hospital.

While doing his internship he became enthralled with each discipline of medicine. First he wanted to be a physician, then a surgeon, a gynaecologist, and so on. Private practice wasn’t for him, he felt.

Then a physician friend asked him to take care of his private practice in Mount Frere while he did specialty training. He tricked him, Mfenyana later joked. But he liked it so much he began his masters in family medicine soon after starting there.

Retirement hasn’t stopped Mfenyana from playing an active role in medical education. He is on the council of the Health Professions Council of South Africa. He has previously headed its Conduct Review and Undergraduate Education committees.

In March last year he was part of a 10-member team who compiled an Academy of Science of South Africa consensus study, entitled Reconceptualisation of Health Professions Education in South Africa.

In 2011, he was on the Minister of Health’s Task Team to advise on establishing hing District Clinical Specialist

Team. This was part of re-engineering South Africa’s primary health care system.

In 2012 he was appointed to the Minister of Higher Education and Training’s Joint Technical Task Team to advise on separating Medunsa Campus from the University of Limpopo and to establish it as Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.

He has been a visiting lecturer at the universities of Cape Town, Liverpool, Illinois, University College London and Rush University.

He has supervised 20 Masters degrees and published in local and international peer-reviewed journals. He has also contributed a chapter to the first three editions of Oxford University Press’s Handbook of Family Medicine in South Africa. And he was part of the screening committee for the 2011/2012 Discovery Foundation Awards.

Other accolades include being awarded a Fellowship by the WK Kellogg Foundation to do a Masters

degree in Educational Administration at Michigan State University in the United States from 1994 to

1996.

When he retired, he said he would still serve where he was called to serve. For Mfenyana, service is about uplifting others and ensuring a more equitable society.

He has stressed that family physicians need to look at the individual within the context of both the family and the community.

He believes service learning should be about learning and service in equal measures. And the service must be determined by the community, based on their needs, so there are benefits for both the students and the community.

He feels free higher education for all is not the answer. Instead we must strive for free higher education for the poor, because it will assist in closing the gap between rich and poor.

It is in recognition of his commitment to producing graduates who focus on social accountability though community practice, who can be of service in the way he – the once-reluctant doctor – has done, that the University of the Witwatersrand takes great pleasure in awarding Khaya Mfenyana an Honorary Doctorate of Science in Medicine.