

CARNEGIE DIVERSIFYING THE ACADEMY PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the latest CDTA Newsletter!

We're thrilled to celebrate our grantees' and alumni's global impact through prestigious events and high-impact publications, reflect on 2025 successes, and share exciting upcoming opportunities.

Join us in honoring the CDTA community's role in diversifying and enriching academia at Wits!

CARNEGIE DIVERSIFYING THE ACADEMY PROGRAM (CDTA)

Building Transformative
Academic Leadership

2026 CDTA team



TRANSFORMATION OFFICE
KANTORO YA PHETOHO



UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Carnegie
CORPORATION
OF NEW YORK

| In The Spotlight

Transformation and Employment Equity Office Annual Report 2025 Now Available

The Transformation Office Annual Report 2025: A Year of Consolidation reflects a year in which transformation at Wits moved from intention to deeper institutional practice. We invite you to read the full report and engage with the progress, lessons, and strategic priorities shaping a more inclusive and human-centred university:

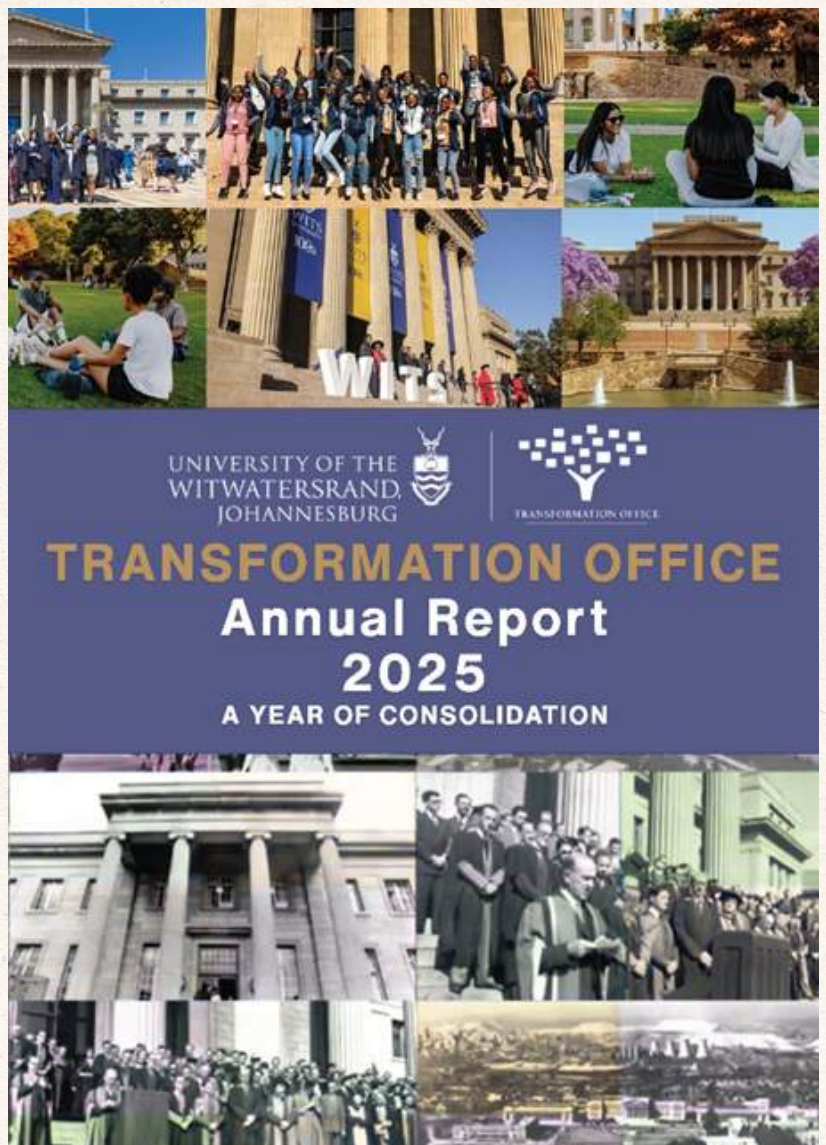
What the Report Says About CDTA

The report positions the Carnegie Diversifying the Academy (CDTA) programme as a central instrument in strengthening Wits' academic pipeline. In 2025, CDTA invested R11.49 million across 31 grants, bringing cumulative Phase 3 investment to R33.80 million, with more than 55% directed at Lecturer-level appointments where progression and equity gains are most significant. Active grantees supervised at least 60 Master's and 16 PhD candidates, reinforcing CDTA's role in growing the next generation of scholars.

The report also highlights promotions and key career milestones among recipients, the consolidation of EMCAT as a leadership development pathway, and the forthcoming DTA Tracer Study in 2026 to assess long-term impact. Together, these contributions demonstrate how targeted investment in people reshapes institutional culture, research productivity, and academic leadership at Wits.

CDTA Alumni Shine at Prestigious ASA Conference: Crossing Boundaries in African Scholarship

We're thrilled to share inspiring stories of CDTA alumni who represented Wits University at the 68th African Studies Association (ASA) Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, from November 20–22, 2025. This premier event, themed "Crossing Boundaries and Recovering Intellectual Traditions," brings together leading scholars from around the world to engage in critical dialogues on African societies, making it one of the most prestigious platforms for advancing African-centred research globally.



Sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), three distinguished CDTA alumni, Professor Neo Ligaraba from the School of Business Sciences, Ms. Zamageda Zungu from the School of Construction Economics and Management, and Dr. Kofi Aning Jnr from the School of Business Sciences, participated fully, including in the Publishing Improvement Pipeline for Emerging Scholars (PIPES) workshop. This intensive session featured editorial roundtables with journals like *African Studies Review* and *History in Africa*, breakout discussions on refining research abstracts, and one-on-one mentorship to elevate manuscripts for international publication.



On November 21, the fellows presented their research to an international audience, positioning Wits' scholarship within vital global debates. Their involvement not only highlighted the calibre of early-career researchers nurtured by CDTA but also demonstrated how the program's financial, mentorship, and professional development support empowers academics to excel on such esteemed stages. The conference culminated in a Closing Gala and Awards Night, where the Wits fellows were recognized as CCNY Outstanding Scholars, affirming their leadership and the university's commitment to socially responsive scholarship.

Dr. Kofi Aning Jnr, a postdoctoral researcher whose work on nation branding reshapes global perceptions of African countries, shared his gratitude: "I am deeply humbled and excited by this opportunity, and I extend my sincere thanks to the entire team for the support throughout my postdoctoral journey. I have learnt so much and been greatly enriched by the workshops, coaching sessions, and resources." His participation exemplifies how CDTA equips early-career scholars to contribute meaningfully to international networks.

These experiences highlight the program's powerful impact, enabling capable young researchers to bridge local insights with global conversations and drive intellectual transformation.

Reflecting on Grantee Successes in 2025: Supervision, Equity, and Research Milestones

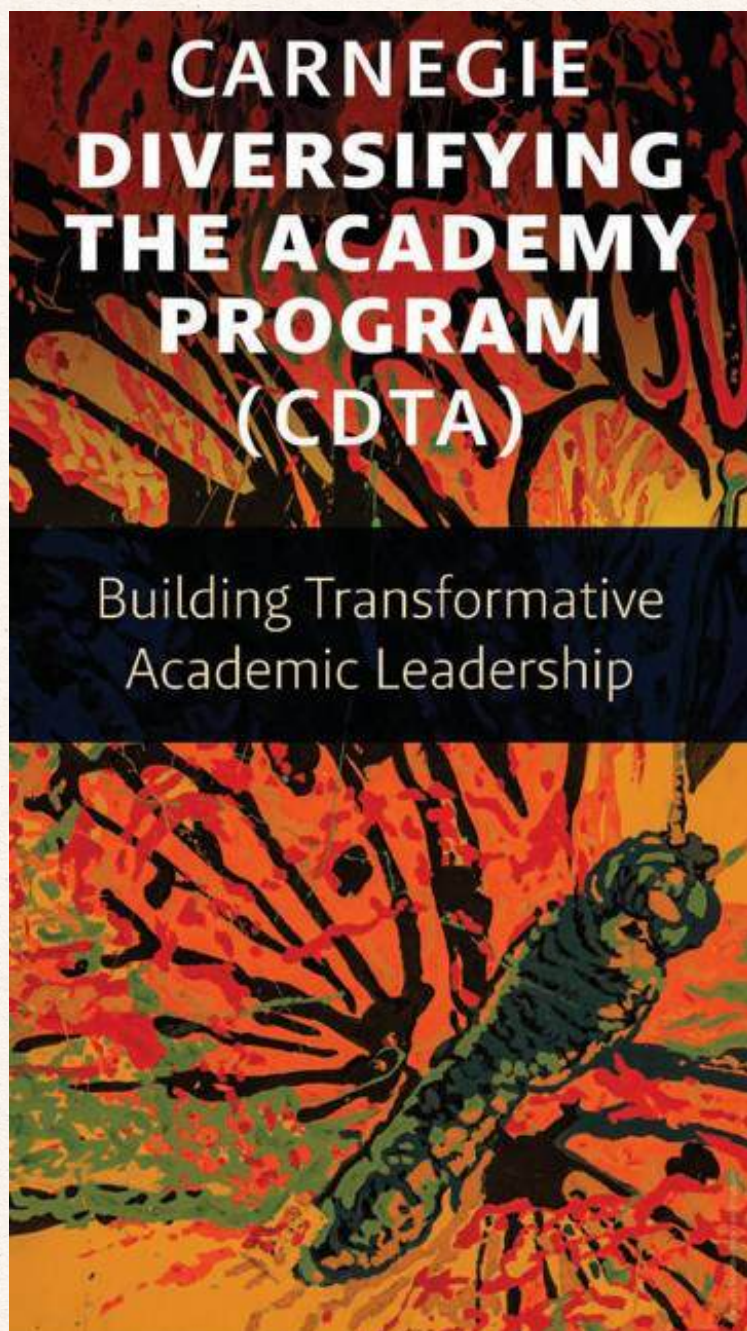
As we launch 2026, we're proud of our grantees' 2025 achievements as capable early- and mid-career researchers. We awarded 11 doctoral grants, 7 postdoctoral grants, 29 research grants, and 6 new appointment grants.

Equity targets were strongly exceeded: All Enabling Grants went to target groups (86.5% Black African, 13.5% Coloured), with 61.5% to women and Black women at 51.9% overall. Postdoctoral fellows advanced outputs, with several publishing up to three peer-reviewed articles.

These milestones show CDTA grantees surpassing expectations and building an inclusive academic future.

CDTA Grantees Excel in High-Impact Journals: Demonstrating Research Excellence

We're incredibly proud of our grantees' recent publications in high-impact factor journals (over 4.5), which reflect their exceptional capabilities as early-career researchers and the transformative role of CDTA in boosting research productivity. Publishing in these prestigious outlets, renowned for their rigorous standards and global influence, positions our scholars as leaders in their fields, contributing cutting-edge knowledge that addresses pressing societal challenges.



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Notable achievements include:



Dr. Nceba Mhlahlo (School of Physics), an Enabling Grant recipient, co-authored "Cosmological evolution of matter with interacting dust fluids" in The European Physical Journal C (Impact Factor: 4.8). This work advances cosmological modeling, showcasing Dr. Mhlahlo's ongoing contributions to the broader physics community, despite his main research focus being astronomy and astrophysics.



Dr. Thabang Rapudu (School of Electrical and Information Engineering), a New Appointment Grant recipient, featured in IEEE Transactions on Wireless Communications (Impact Factor: 10.7) with "Machine Learning-Based Channel Estimation for Multi-RIS-Assisted mmWave Massive-MIMO OFDM System in a Dynamic Environment," and in IEEE Open Journal of the Communications Society (Impact Factor: 6.1) with "Channel Estimation for Wideband Multi-RIS-Assisted mmWave Massive-MIMO OFDM System With Beam Squint Effect." His research pushes boundaries in wireless technology.



Dr. Gillian D. Mahumane (Wits Advanced Drug Delivery Platform), a grantee, published two articles: "A review of bigels for neurotrauma therapeutics: Structural insights for tissue microenvironment alignment" in Biomaterials Advances (Impact Factor: 6.0), and "A Dual-Template Molecularly Imprinted Polymer to Inhibit Quorum Sensing Molecules" in International Journal of Molecular Sciences (Impact Factor: 4.9). These contributions advance biomaterial systems for neural repair and targeted molecular strategies against antimicrobial resistance, strengthening translational drug delivery for neurotrauma and infection patients.



Dr. Goitsione Olifant (Wits Business School), a New Appointment grantee, published "Navigating the current landscape of green hydrogen" in Progress in Energy (IF: 9.8). This research addresses the potential and challenges of sustainable energy solutions critical to South Africa's future.

These success stories underscore CDTA's commitment to fostering a diverse and thriving academic landscape by providing crucial financial, academic, and personal development support. Early in their careers, our grantees are already making significant impacts, setting benchmarks for excellence and inspiring the next generation.



Dr. Kofi Aning Jnr Appointed to ASA Emerging Scholars Network Board.

In a further testament to CDTA's impact, Dr. Kofi Aning Jnr has been appointed to the board of the ASA's Emerging Scholars Network (ESN).

As the only Africa-based member on this five-person leadership team, Dr. Aning will support mentorship and professional development for early-career scholars worldwide.

This prestigious role amplifies African voices in global African Studies and reflects the program's success in nurturing leaders who shape international networks.

Upcoming events and Opportunities

Carnegie Diversifying the Academy (CDTA) Grants Open for Applications

The Transformation and Employment Equity Office announce the February 2026 CDTA Grants cycle. Applications open February 4, 2026, and close March 27, 2026. We especially encourage academics with disabilities to apply for the Enabling Grant, which addresses disability-related barriers to research via assistive tools, flexible support, and more.



Grant Categories and Awards:

- **New Appointments Grant** – Early and Mid-Career Academics: 6 awards for new senior lecturer-level staff (preference for Black/Coloured South Africans, ≥60% female).
- **Post-Doctoral Fellowship Grant:** 9 awards of R300,000/year for 3 years (Black/Coloured South Africans, ≥65% female; PhD within 5 years).
- **Doctoral Grants:** 5 awards totalling R270,492 over 2 years (Black/Coloured South African academics, ≥65% female).
- **Enabling Grants:** 4 awards up to R250,000 over 2 years for research productivity/promotion (Black/Coloured South Africans; special encouragement for those with disabilities).

Applicants with disabilities receive confidential support from the Disability Rights Unit (DRU). Contact Mr. Lethu Kapueja at lethu.kapueja@wits.ac.za or Bernadette Johnson at bernadette.johnson@wits.ac.za for eligibility, requirements, and the application link.

We plan additional calls throughout 2026, emphasizing new appointments and staff grants.

Transformation Lab Series Workshops: Fostering Inclusive Academic Leadership

We're delighted to introduce the Transformation Lab Series to our CDTA grantees and alumni. It is an innovative workshop program aimed at empowering CDTA grantees and alumni with practical skills for driving equity and transformation in higher education.

Building on our commitment to personal and professional growth, these interactive sessions will explore key themes like belonging, inclusive leadership, navigating institutional change, and integrating diversity into research practices.

Please keep an eye on our website:

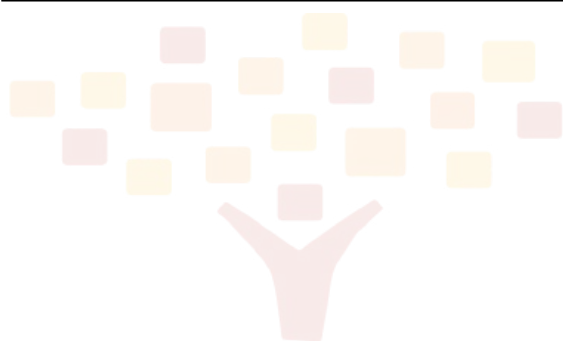
<https://www.wits.ac.za/transformationoffice/programmes-and-projects/diversifying-the-academy/> for more details.

Here is a schedule of upcoming events in the year 2026:

Event/Activity	Date	Description
Group mentoring: Postdocs	Mar 3, 2026	A group and peer mentoring session to celebrate successes, explore challenges and provide community and support
Group mentoring: PhD candidates	Mar 3, 2026	A group and peer mentoring session to celebrate successes, explore challenges and provide community and support
CDTA Induction for new grantees	May 21, 2026	Induction of new grantees into CDTA programme
Mentoring series on Public Engagement: Conversation with Brett Pyper	May 22, 2026	CDTA mentoring event exploring thinking and practicalities of vibrant, productive, 2-way learning engagements with the Public. In this event, learning about a jazz initiative.



Group mentoring: Postdocs	Jun 15, 2026	A group and peer mentoring session to celebrate successes, explore challenges and provide community and support
Group mentoring: PhD candidates	Jun 16, 2026	A group and peer mentoring session to celebrate successes, explore challenges and provide community and support
Transformation Lab Workshop Series - Belonging	Aug 13, 2026	CDTA event on the Transformation Lab Workshop Series -with a focus on Belonging
CDTA Induction for new grantees	3 September 2026 (morning)	Induction of new grantees into CDTA programme



Mentoring series on Public Engagement: With Bernadette Johnson	3 September 2026 (afternoon)	CDTA mentoring event exploring thinking and practicalities of vibrant, productive, 2-way learning engagements with the Public. This event will continue the exploration of mapping of and expanding your publics.
Group mentoring: Postdocs	Sep 14, 2026	A group and peer mentoring session to celebrate successes, explore challenges and provide community and support
Group mentoring: PhD candidates	Sep 15, 2026	A group and peer mentoring session to celebrate successes, explore challenges and provide community and support
CDTA Induction for new grantees	Nov 5, 2026	Induction of new grantees into CDTA programme

Join us in celebrating the growth of our CDTA community and its profound contribution to diversifying the academy!

2026 CDTA Team

