

CARNEGIE DIVERSIFYING THE ACADEMY PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the latest edition of the Carnegie Diversifying the Academy (CDTA) Newsletter!

This month, we are thrilled to welcome our 2025 cohort and celebrate the achievements of inspiring 2024 PhD graduates.

Our latest induction session brought together 11 new recipients, sparking exciting ideas for the journey ahead.

We also highlight the incredible work of current recipient Dr Nomalanga Mashinini as she leads her first Africa Cyber Law Conference.

The EMCAT program recently hosted a productive academic portfolio-writing retreat, and we have an indication of events lined up for the year.

Stay engaged as we continue to drive meaningful change for you in academia!

CARNEGIE DIVERSIFYING THE ACADEMY PROGRAM (CDTA)

Building Transformative
Academic Leadership



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2025 CDTA team

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Empowering change: Highlights from the CDTA 2025 Induction Session

The first 2025 cohort of Carnegie Diversifying the Academy (CDTA) recipients embarked on their journey with an inspiring and thought-provoking induction session on February 28, led by Mr. Lethu Kapueja and Prof. Toni Wadley.

This engaging session encouraged recipients to reflect on their aspirations for personal and institutional transformation over the next two to five years, setting the stage for a dynamic and impactful academic experience.

In small, interactive discussion groups, recipients explored their personal transformation goals, revealing common themes and shared ambitions:

Overcoming workplace challenges: Strategies for handling gaslighting, being overlooked, and feeling unappreciated, with resilience as a key tool for growth.

Tackling workplace bullying: Commitment to fostering a positive, respectful work environment.

Transitioning to research leadership: Shifting focus from administration and teaching to research as a primary identity.

Building leadership skills: Growing into leadership roles through mentorship and academic influence. **Enhancing community engagement:** Bridging academia and society for meaningful research impact.

Work-life balance: Prioritising well-being while maintaining excellence and avoiding burnout.



Recipients envisioned a university culture that actively supports academic growth, prioritising: Better feedback culture, through advocating for open, constructive dialogue with senior management.

- Recognising Early-Career Academics by ensuring the institution supports them as researchers primarily. A fair workload distribution that helps in balancing research, teaching, and administration equitably.
- Diversity in academia, by promoting race and gender inclusivity with concrete actions, and;
- Stronger institutional support in areas of mentorship, funding, and development beyond output expectations.

Insights from Prof. Toni Wadley

Prof. Wadley spoke about Wits initiatives to support academics' development at each stage of their journey including the Early Career Academic Development programme (ECAD), and for mid-career academics, the Enhancing Mid-Career Academic Transition programme (EMCAT).

CDTA offers:

- Workshops, Peer Mentoring & Coaching for career navigation.
- Self-Awareness & agency training on work-life balance, imposter syndrome, and workplace challenges.
- Science Communication training to expand research impact.

Looking ahead

The session reinforced the role of both individual action and institutional change in shaping a thriving academic environment. With mentorship, coaching, and advocacy, the 2025 CDTA recipients are set for a transformative journey towards a more inclusive and supportive academia.

Trailblazing in Cyber Law: CDTA recipient, Dr Nomalanga Mashinini's vision for Africa



In an inspiring feat of leadership and determination, CDTA recipient Dr Nomalanga Mashinini, recently chaired the first-ever African Cyber Law Conference – 4 to 5 February 2025 - a groundbreaking initiative that is reshaping the landscape of cyber law on the continent. As a passionate advocate for technology law and image rights, her journey from an ambitious idea to a fully realised, impactful event is one that both current and aspiring CDTA recipients can draw inspiration from.

Dr Mashinini's passion for cyber law was sparked during her Master's studies, where she began exploring how technology affects personal rights. Over the years, she delved deep into issues such as artificial intelligence, image rights, deepfakes, and the exploitation of personal data. However, despite attending numerous international conferences in New York, Mexico, and Geneva, she noticed a glaring gap - Africa had no dedicated cyber law conference.

"I could not shake the loneliness that came with going to conferences abroad and realising that we didn't have a homegrown space for cyber law scholars in Africa,"

Dr Mashinini reflected. "Every time I looked at my CV, I noticed that all my conference presentations were happening outside of South Africa. That needed to change."

Fuelled by this realisation, she envisioned a conference in South Africa that would bring together African scholars, policymakers, and legal practitioners to discuss and shape the future of cyber law on the continent. But turning this vision into reality was no small task. The first challenge? Securing funding. Recognising the potential of her idea, she applied for the National Research Foundation's Knowledge Interchange and Collaboration Grant. This required meticulous planning, from structuring the conference's objectives to securing keynote speakers before even receiving funding.

Dr Mashinini spearheaded the process with a formidable team of African female academics, from branding the conference as the African Cyber Law Conference (ACLC) to building its digital presence through a dedicated website. Her determination led to the successful execution of a conference that not only attracted key African scholars but also engaged voices from the UK and India. The response was overwhelming: the conference received 85 abstract submissions and saw participation from over 60 delegates.

Importantly, she ensured that inclusivity was a core value of ACLC. The conference featured a majority of female keynote speakers, challenging the traditional male dominance in technology law. It also created a multidisciplinary platform, bringing together experts in competition law, tax law, digital finance, and artificial intelligence ethics. Dr Mashinini credits her leadership success to a strong sense of humility and faith. "I had to become small so that the vision could grow. There was no room for my ego - only for the purpose of creating a platform that would foster academic engagement," she shared.

Her ability to manage tensions, delegate tasks, and maintain professionalism played a key role in ACLC's success. She envisions ACLC growing into a globally recognised event, positioning Africa as a cyber law leader. She urges CDTA recipients to embrace interdisciplinary collaboration, emphasising that even the smallest ideas, when driven by passion and strategy, can reshape industries. For those aspiring to make an impact, Dr. Mashinini's journey proves that vision, resilience, and boldness can break new ground. The future of African cyber law is unfolding, and through ACLC, Africa is claiming its place on the global stage.

Celebrating our inspiring PhD Graduates: A new generation of Academics!



Dr Mandisa Jewel Simamane
Biokinetics

THESIS: *Physical activity intervention plan for hypertensive patients of Umlazi township, KwaZulu-Natal*



Dr Matshidiso Valeria Sello
Demography and Population Studies

THESIS: *The Social contexts of childhood malnutrition in South Africa*



Dr Sibongile Zwane
School of Construction Economics and Management

THESIS: *A comparative approach to market-wide herding*

CDTA-supported programme for mid-career researchers holds academic portfolio retreat



The five CDTA recipients (left to right): the newly-promoted Professor Phillippe Gradidge, Neo Ligaraba, Mpho Molete, Natalie Benjamin-Damons, Brendon Billings

Last month, the Enhancing Mid-Career Academic Transitions (EMCAT) programme held their flagship event, the academic portfolio writing retreat, in Muldersdrift from Wednesday 19th to Friday 21st Feb. The aim of the retreat is to put together an academic portfolio that can be used for promotions, awards, grant applications or fellowships. Embracing themselves as leaders, participants work on the self-first, exploring their vision and mission, values and belief systems. This introspective and reflexive check-in strengthens their way of knowing, being and doing, and aligns their approach to all the academic missions: teaching, research and academic citizenship/community engagement.

The participants' personally and professionally integrated, holistic portfolios are grounded in these internal reflections. Prof Georgia Torres shared "I've been trying to find the golden thread in my research but what I've realised this week is that I'm the golden thread. It's who I am, my purpose, values that infuses everything I do." A highlight of the retreat was the 'Leadership walk' (under cover this time with all the rain!) where participants walked amongst leadership quotes, found the one that spoke to them personally and professionally, and then journaled on how it resonated with them, their leadership journey, and what is being called from them.



EMCAT participants at the academic portfolio retreat. EMCAT is facilitated by Rieta Ganas (CLTD) and our own Antonia Wadley from the CDTA programme

One of the participants, Motlalepule Nathane-Taulela shared how a previous EMCAT participant had advised her "to really drink in the quotes on the Leadership walk." Those words had so inspired the colleague as she put together her soon-to-be successful application to promotion of Professor.

The general consensus was that the retreat had provided a moment to pause and really get clarity on what they had done, where they're going, and where the gaps are.

The EMCAT programme will have a Conversation Event in May and then wraps up in June this year.



One of the biggest 'ahas' was learning the difference between a 'researcher' and a 'scholar'. Most academics think of themselves as a researcher, defined as someone working on a narrow, specialized, deep investigation into a research question that contributes to a specific field. Far fewer participants had thought about how they are scholars, defined as people focusing on the dissemination, synthesis and teaching of knowledge, and applying that knowledge to practice.



EMCAT participants at the academic portfolio retreat.

Participants explored their contribution and approach to community engagement in the African context. One group activity to support this portfolio section caused much hilarity. The instructions were to brainstorm the qualities and characteristics of a leader in and for Africa, and then put those prompts into an AI art generator. Can you imagine from this photo, what the output was!?



The EMCAT programme, a collaboration between CLTD, TEEQ, and the Research Office, is funded by Carnegie, and supports academics in mid-career transitions and leadership roles. Launched in 2022 under Phase 2 of Carnegie's Diversifying the Academy, it addresses the 'leaky pipeline' issue, particularly among black academics. Research shows early-career academics receive support, but mid-career ones often do not, prompting EMCAT's creation.

Now in its second phase, EMCAT, though linked to CDTA, is open to all mid-career academics at Wits, with 27 participants, including five CDTA recipients.

2025 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: CARNEGIE DIVERSIFYING THE ACADEMY GRANTS

The TEEO has invited applications for the next round of Carnegie Diversifying the Academy (CDTA) Grants. These grants aim to support Black South African and Coloured South African academics by enhancing research opportunities and fostering diversity in academia.

Grant categories available:

New Appointments Grant: Supports early and mid-career academics at Wits.

Post-Doctoral Fellowship Grant: Open to recent PhD graduates pursuing a post-doc at Wits.

Doctoral Grants: For Wits staff pursuing a PhD.

Enabling Grants: Supports research productivity and career advancement for Wits academics.

Who can apply?

Black South African and Coloured South African academics at Wits.



Application period:
6 February – 28 March 2025

Where to apply: Submit applications via the online form:



<https://redcap.core.wits.ac.za/redcap/surveys/?s=HMAP3KX3TJFMJ78L>

FOR MORE DETAILS, CONTACT:

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Events

Mentoring sessions for all CDTA recipients

Weds 23rd April 2025 12-2pm online
With Dr Phumzile Mmope

Bring your interpersonal and communication challenges

Thursday 21st August 2025 2-3.30
in-person, venue tbc

With Dr Bernadette Johnson

Who are your publics? Thinking about public engagement in your research

Monday 8th December 12-1pm online
With Prof Toni Wadley

Reflecting on your year: lessons learnt, things to celebrate & plans for 2026

Mentoring check ins for recipients doing their PhDs or Post Docs

Check ins on Teams – diary invites to come via Outlook or contact Toni
(antonia.wadley@wits.ac.za)

PhD check ins

24.03.25

23.06.25

22.09.25

Postdoc check ins

25.03.25

24.06.25

23.09.25

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>>> **IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT** <<<



A new grant reporting system for CDTA



We are rolling out a new reporting system for the CDTA program. This new system, captured via survey, is being implemented to provide a structured way to record the experiences of recipients throughout your academic journey. This system is closely linked to the Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Planning (MEL-P) framework finalised last year, and will ensure that the program collects real-time insights into the challenges and progress of recipients. By tracking milestones at 6-month, 12-month, 18-month, and end-of-grant intervals, this system will allow you to reflect on your academic growth, professional development, and the institutional environment in which you work.



Through this comprehensive tracking process, you can document your research outputs, leadership roles, postgraduate supervision, and the impact of your work in addressing national and global challenges. The system also captures institutional barriers, highlighting areas where support structures can be strengthened to enhance academic success. The data collected will inform strategic interventions to ensure that early and mid-career academics receive the necessary resources, mentorship, and opportunities to thrive. This initiative aligns with the broader goal of fostering an inclusive and supportive academic environment at Wits University. Survey invites will come at six monthly intervals relative to your grant start date.



Look out for the request in your inbox!