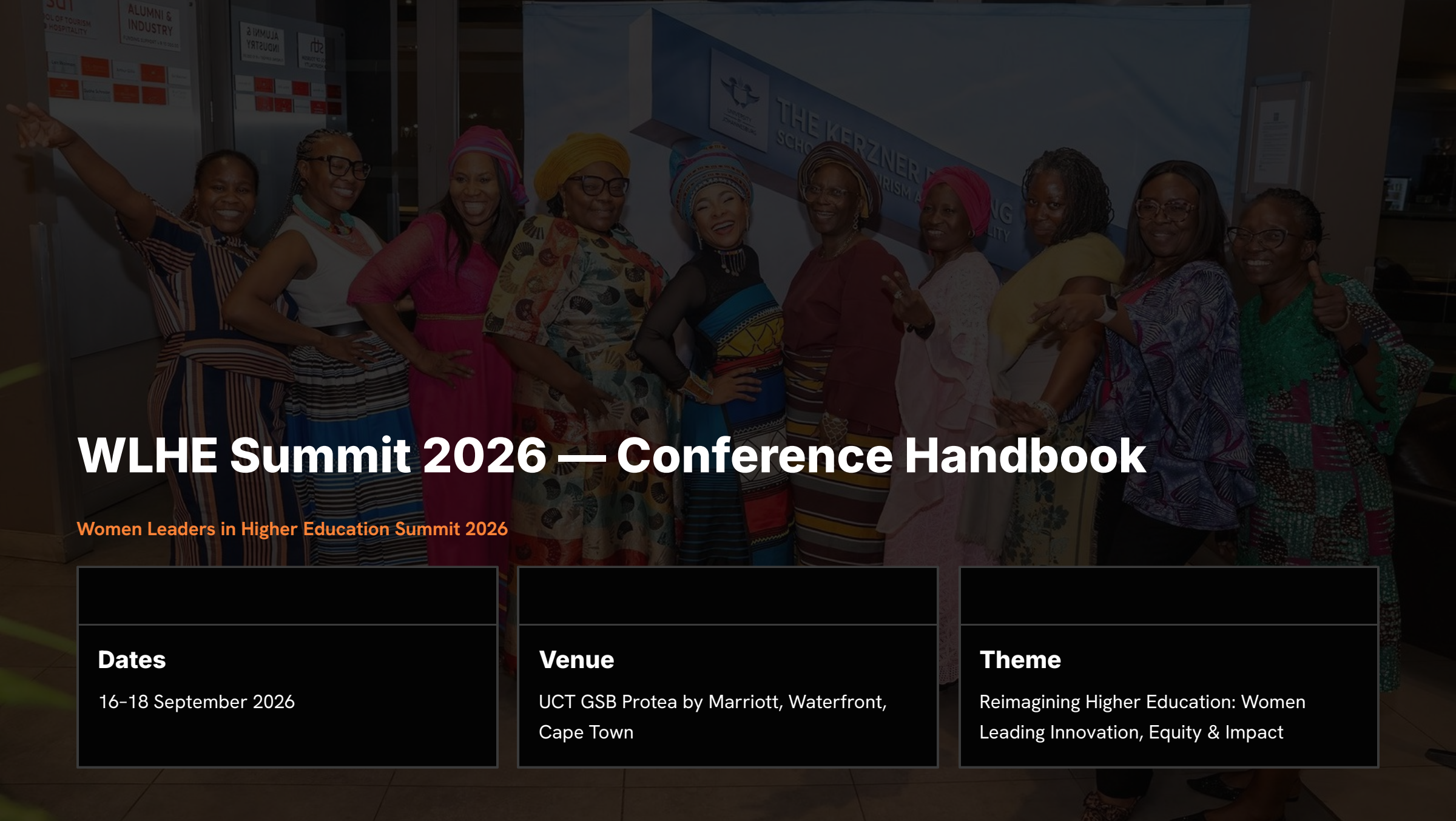




WLHE Summit 2026 — Conference Handbook

Women Leaders in Higher Education Summit 2026

Dates

16–18 September 2026

Venue

UCT GSB Protea by Marriott, Waterfront,
Cape Town

Theme

Reimagining Higher Education: Women
Leading Innovation, Equity & Impact

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Foreword from the Convener

Higher education stands at a defining crossroads. Across the globe, institutions are being asked to do more—with fewer resources—while responding to rapid technological change, persistent inequities, and growing concerns around staff and student wellbeing. In these moments of complexity, women's leadership is not optional; it is essential.

The Women Leaders in Higher Education (WLHE) Summit was created as a deliberate space for reflection, connection, and action. Following the powerful conversations, partnerships, and commitments that emerged from the 2025 edition, WLHE 2026 invites us to go further—to reimagine what higher education can and should look like when women lead innovation, equity, and impact.

This year's summit intentionally integrates conversations on Artificial Intelligence, health, and wellness—not as add-ons, but as critical tools for sustainable leadership and institutional transformation. WLHE 2026 brings together established leaders, emerging leaders, researchers, funders, and postgraduate students to learn from one another, challenge assumptions, and co-create pathways toward healthier, more inclusive, and future-ready higher education systems.

I warmly invite you to be part of WLHE 2026; not only to share your expertise, but to reconnect with purpose, build meaningful networks, and collectively shape the future of higher education in Africa and beyond.



Professor Beatrice Opeolu

Convener, WLHE Summit

Founder & Director, BEE Solutions and Consultancy Services

Foreword from the Co-Host

The 2nd WLHE Summit is upon us and we are looking forward to a vibrant event with amazing speakers to inspire and motivate us. We have experienced and young women who are traversing the world of higher education, leading by example, and who will be sharing from their own personal journeys.

The event will bring together women from various higher education institutions within South Africa, the African continent and the world at large. We also have dynamic panel sessions that will engage with topical challenges that women in higher education face.

We are looking forward to this year's summit and we hope to see many of you there. Come join with us on this exciting journey!



Prof Brenda Moodley
University of KwaZulu-Natal

About the Summit

Theme: Reimagining Higher Education: Women Leading Innovation, Equity & Impact

The Women Leaders in Higher Education (WLHE) Summit 2026 convenes in September 2026 at a pivotal moment for global higher education. As institutions navigate rapid technological change, widening inequities, increasing performance pressures, and declining wellbeing, the leadership of women across academic, research, and professional spaces has never been more critical. Building on the success of the 2025 WLHE Summit, the 2026 edition moves decisively from reflection to reimagination.

Dates

16–18 September 2026

Venue

UCT GSB Protea by Marriott, Waterfront, Cape Town, South Africa

Convener

Prof. Beatrice Opeolu, BEE Solutions and Consultancy Services

Format

Keynotes, parallel panel sessions, plenary reflections, audience engagement, exhibition, formal dinner & awards

Executive Summary

The WLHE Summit 2026 is a strategic leadership meeting designed for Vice-Chancellors, Deans, senior executives, and research funders seeking to drive innovation, equity, and sustainable impact within higher education systems. The summit focuses on women's leadership at the intersection of Artificial Intelligence, equity-driven transformation, and health and wellness.



Strengthen Leadership Capacity

Across the higher education sector at all career stages



Equitable Talent Development

Support retention and advancement for women at every level



AI-Enabled Futures

Enhance institutional readiness for digital transformation



Global Transformation

Align with sustainability and equity agendas worldwide

Senior leaders, emerging leaders, researchers, postgraduate students, and funding agencies invested in systemic impact are invited to participate as speakers, attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors.

Who Should Attend

WLHE 2026 is designed for a broad community of leaders, scholars, and professionals committed to innovation, equity, and impact in higher education.

Senior Leadership

- Vice-Chancellors & Deputy Vice-Chancellors
- Deans, Directors & Department Heads
- Academic & Administrative Leaders
- Women in Governance & Policy
- Funders, Policymakers & Professionals invested in systemic impact

Researchers, Innovators & Emerging Leaders

- Researchers, Academics & Innovators
- Project Managers & Programme Coordinators
- Academic Entrepreneurs
- Emerging Women Leaders
- Postgraduate Students (Master's, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellows)

Summit Focus Areas

1

Day 1

Equity, Belonging & Systemic Change

Gendered barriers, inclusive institutional cultures, funding access, promotion pathways, and policy reforms

2

Day 2

Innovation & AI for Transformation

Ethical and strategic use of AI and digital tools in teaching, research, leadership, and governance — culminating in the Formal Summit Dinner & Awards Evening

3

Day 3

Health, Wellness & Sustainable Leadership

Burnout, emotional labour, workload pressures, and sustainable leadership practices — closing with the WLHE Wellness Declaration

📌 Participants will leave empowered, connected, and equipped to lead innovation, equity, wellness, and impact in higher education.

Programme at a Glance

Day	Theme	Key Sessions
Day 1 Wed 16 Sep	Equity, Belonging & Systemic Change	Opening Ceremony · Keynote 1: Prof. Stephanie Burton · Panel 1: Reimagining HE Systems for Equity & Global Relevance · Panel 2: Mentorship, Sponsorship & Inclusive Leadership Pipelines · Audience Engagement · Keynote 2: Prof. Ntebogeng Mokgalaka-Fleischmann · Plenary Reflection
Day 2 Thu 17 Sep	Innovation & AI for Transformation	Keynote 3: Prof. Jane Catherine Ngila · Panel 3: Intergenerational Perspectives on Digital Transformation · Panel 4: Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Universities as Drivers of Impact · Keynote 4: Prof. Daniela Pampanin · Guest Plenary: Kingsley Amako · Audience Engagement · Plenary Reflection · Formal Summit Dinner & Awards Evening (19:00–21:30)
Day 3 Fri 18 Sep	Health, Wellness & Sustainable Leadership	Keynote 5: Prof. Esther Titilayo Akinlabi · Panel 5: Institutionalizing Wellbeing, Executive Resilience & Health Systems · Panel 6: Global South Perspectives & Locally Relevant Global Engagement · Keynote 6: Prof. J. Goosby Smith · Closing Plenary: Prof. Tara Sabo-Attwood · Audience Engagement · Plenary Reflection · Closing Ceremony & Valedictory Remarks

 Each parallel panel session is preceded by a 10-minute **Catalyst Session** in which the moderator frames the strategic context and provocation questions before introducing panelists.

Day 1 Programme — Equity, Belonging & Systemic Change

WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 — EQUITY, BELONGING, SYSTEMIC CHANGE AND IMPACT

Time	Session & Topic	Speakers / Panelists / Catalysts
07:30-08:30	Arrival, Registration & Morning Refreshments	—
08:30-09:00	Opening Ceremony & Welcome Address	Prof. Beatrice Opeolu (Convener, WLHE)
09:00-09:40	Keynote 1: The Future University: Preparation for a New Era of Learning, Leadership and Societal Impact	Prof. Stephanie Burton
09:40-10:00	TEA BREAK & NETWORKING	—
10:00-10:15	Catalyst Session 1: Framing Reimagining Higher Education Systems for Equity and Global Relevance	Catalyst: Prof. Vuyelwa Jacqueline Tembu
10:15-11:15	Executive Panel 1 (Plenary Track): Reimagining Higher Education Systems for Equity and Global Relevance	H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, Prof. Bolanle Akeredolu-Ale, Prof. Mamokgethi Phakeng, Prof. Thenjiwe Meyiwa
11:15-11:20	TRANSITION BREAK	—
11:20-11:35	Catalyst Session 2: Mentorship, Sponsorship and Inclusive Leadership Pipelines	Catalyst: Prof. Brenda Moodley
11:35-12:35	Panel 2 (Plenary Track): Mentorship, Sponsorship and Inclusive Leadership Pipelines	Prof. Chioma Blaise Chikere, Ms. Hellen Banda-Adogo, Dr. Jabulile Msimango-Galawe, Ms. Meekness Lunga-Ayidu, Ms. Holly Futter
12:35-13:30	LUNCH & EXHIBITION NETWORKING	—
13:30-14:10	Keynote 2: Women Leading Institutional Transformation Through Vision, Courage and Influence	Prof. Ntebogeng Mokgalaka-Fleischmann
14:10-14:25	Guest Plenary: Reimagining Leadership: Creating Cultures Where People and Ideas Can Flourish	Ms. Kirsten Garbini
14:25-15:00	Audience Engagement: Policy Reforms & Institutional Equity Scorecards — Key action items	Open Floor
15:00-15:20	AFTERNOON TEA BREAK	—
15:20-16:00	Plenary Reflection: Day 1 Synthesis & Key Takeaways	Synthesis Team
16:00-16:30	Wrap-up & Networking	—

Day 2 Programme — Innovation & AI for Transformation

THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2026 — INNOVATION & AI FOR TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Time	Session & Topic	Speakers / Panelists / Catalysts
08:00-08:30	Arrival & Registration	—
08:30-09:00	Welcome & Day 1 Strategic Recap	Prof. Olatunde Olatunji
09:00-09:40	Keynote 3: Innovation and the Future of Higher Education Leadership	Prof. Jane Catherine Ngila
09:40-10:00	TEA BREAK & NETWORKING	—
10:00-10:15	Catalyst Session 3: Intergenerational Perspectives on Digital Transformation in Higher Education	Catalyst: Prof. Seun Oyekola
10:15-11:15	Panel 3 (Plenary Track): Intergenerational Perspectives on Digital Transformation in Higher Education	Prof. Nita Inderlal Sukdeo, Dr. Edith Phalane, Dr. Sipokazi Mabuwa, Mrs. E. J. Alawode, Mrs. Mmasibidi Setaka-Bapela, Ms. Holly Futter
11:15-11:20	TRANSITION BREAK	—
11:20-11:35	Catalyst Session 4: Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Universities as Drivers of Impact	Catalyst: Dr. Jabulile Msimango-Galawe
11:35-12:35	Panel 4 (Plenary Track): Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Universities as Drivers of Impact	Ms. Nthatisi Quella, Prof. Oluwakemi Fapojuwo, Dr. Beata Buhlungu, Prof. Omobola Okoh, Dr. Lana-Ann Brady
12:35-13:30	LUNCH & NETWORKING	—
13:30-14:10	Keynote 4: Leading Beyond Today: Building Resilient Institutions Through Purpose, People and Partnerships	Prof. Daniela Pampanin
14:10-14:30	Guest Plenary: The Creative Economy as a Catalyst for African Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Opportunity	Kingsley Amako
14:30-15:00	Audience Engagement: Designing Institutional AI & Digital Transformation Policies	Open Floor
15:00-15:20	AFTERNOON TEA BREAK	—
15:20-16:00	Plenary Reflection: Innovation Roadmap & Key Takeaways	Synthesis Team
16:00-16:30	Wrap-up & Evening Dinner Transition	—
19:00-21:30	FORMAL SUMMIT DINNER & AWARDS EVENING	Special Addresses & Gala Keynote

WLHE 2026 Summit Dinner Programme

THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2026 | 19:30-22:00 | CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Time	Duration	Programme
19:30-19:40	10 min	Arrival, Welcome Drinks and Seating
19:40-19:45	5 min	Welcome to the Summit Dinner — Prof. Beatrice Opeolu
19:45-19:55	10 min	Dinner Opening: Introduction to the Evening and First Course Served — Prof. Brenda Moodley
19:55-20:15	20 min	Summit Dinner Keynote: Leaving the Door Open: A Leadership Legacy of Mentorship and Sponsorship — Dr. Gertie Arts
20:15-20:30	15 min	A Celebration in Song — Special Musical Performance — Ms. Ntombi Nhlapo
20:30-20:55	25 min	Dinner and Table Conversations
20:55-21:05	10 min	WLHE Awards: Celebrating Women Who Lead — Live nominations for outstanding women leaders in higher education — MC / Facilitator
21:05-21:20	15 min	The Leadership Legacy Honour — Prof. Beatrice Opeolu
21:20-21:30	10 min	A Tribute to Mentorship and Sponsorship — Short reflections from the honourees — Honourees
21:30-21:45	15 min	Women Who Open Doors — Interactive reflection and connection — All
21:45-21:55	10 min	Dessert, Coffee and Networking
21:55-22:00	5 min	Appreciation and Closing

Day 3 Programme — Health, Wellness & Sustainable Leadership

FRIDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2026 — HEALTH, WELLNESS AND SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

Time	Session & Topic	Speakers / Panelists / Catalysts
08:00-08:30	Arrival & Morning Registration	—
08:30-09:00	Welcome & Day 2 Recap	Prof. Brenda Moodley
09:00-09:40	Keynote 5: Innovation Without Exclusion: Building Equitable Universities for the Digital Age	Prof. Esther Titilayo Akinlabi
09:40-10:00	TEA BREAK & WELLNESS CORNER	—
10:00-10:15	Catalyst Session 5: Institutionalizing Wellbeing, Executive Resilience & Institutional Health Systems	Catalyst: Prof. Yvonne Paul
10:15-11:15	Panel 5 (Plenary Track): Institutionalizing Wellbeing, Executive Resilience & Institutional Health Systems	Prof. Vuyelwa Jacqueline Tembu, Prof. Emmanuella Amope Olubanke Sogebi, Prof. Mathildah Mokgatle
11:15-11:20	TRANSITION BREAK	—
11:20-11:35	Catalyst Session 6: Framing Mindful Leadership, Boundary Setting & Personal Mastery	Catalyst: Ms. Lillian Ogbogoh Moderator: Prof. Beatrice Opeolu
11:35-12:35	Panel 6 (Plenary Track): Global South Perspectives and Locally Relevant Global Engagement	Prof. Thasmai Dhurumraj, Prof. Emmanuella Amope Olubanke Sogebi, Ms. Nomfundo Mhlambi
12:35-13:30	LUNCH & NETWORKING	—
13:30-14:10	Keynote 6: Leading Well: Creating Healthy Universities That Enable Excellence	Prof. J. Goosby Smith
14:15-14:35	Closing Plenary: From Wellbeing to Workplace Culture: Building a Sustainable Wellness Programme for Staff	Prof. Tara Sabo-Attwood
14:35-15:00	Audience Engagement: Drafting the WLHE Wellness & Sustainable Leadership Declaration	Open Floor
15:00-15:20	AFTERNOON TEA BREAK	—
15:20-16:00	Plenary Reflection: Communiqué & Policy Declaration	Synthesis Team
16:00-16:30	Closing Ceremony & Valedictory Remarks	Convener & Advisory Board

Keynote Speakers

CONFIRMED KEYNOTES — KEYNOTES 1-6 CONFIRMED

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SPEAKER

Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor

Former Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union, Addis Ababa. Vice President Governing Board - Forum for African Women Educationalologists - Africa (FAWE Africa), CM

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H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor
Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE Africa), Cameroon
Panel 1 (Day 1): Reimagining Higher Education Systems for Equity and Global Relevance

Professor Sarah Anyang Agbor is a renowned Cameroonian academic, educator, and policy leader with over two decades of experience advancing higher education, research, and sustainable development across Africa. A Professor of African and Commonwealth Literature, she has held distinguished leadership roles including African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research at the University of Bamenda. She currently serves as Vice President of the Africa Board of FAWE and is a member of the advisory board of UNITAR Division for Prosperity.

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SPEAKER

Prof. Stephanie Burton

University of Pretoria - ZA

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Prof. Stephanie Burton
University of Pretoria, South Africa
Keynote 1 (Day 1): The Future University: Preparation for a New Era of Learning, Leadership and Societal Impact

Professor Stephanie Burton is a biochemistry expert and academic leader with extensive experience in research, postgraduate education, and institutional development. She previously served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Postgraduate Education at the University of Pretoria and as Interim President of the Academy of Science of South Africa. She co-chairs the S20 Science Forum for the 2025 G20 Summit. She holds an MSc in Organic Chemistry and a PhD in Biochemistry from Rhodes University, with expertise spanning biocatalysis, applied biochemistry, and sustainable processes.

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SPEAKER

Prof. Ntebogeng Mokgalaka-Fleischmann

Tshwane University of Technology - ZA

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Prof. Ntebogeng Mokgalaka-Fleischmann
Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa
Keynote 2 (Day 1): Women Leading Institutional Transformation Through Vision, Courage and Influence

Professor Ntebogeng Mokgalaka-Fleischmann is a distinguished academic leader and researcher with over 25 years of experience in higher education and science leadership. She holds a Doctor of Technology in Chemistry and an MBA in Education Management. She is currently the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science at Tshwane University of Technology and a Full Professor and NRF-rated researcher. She serves as a council member of SACNASP, chairs the Qualifications Assessment Committee, and is a member of the UNESCO Natural Sciences Sector Committee. Her research focuses on drought prediction, indigenous knowledge on weather patterns, and wireless sensor networks.

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SPEAKER

Prof. Daniela Pampanin

*Professor,
University of Stavanger - NOR*

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Prof. Daniela Pampanin
Universitetet i Stavanger, Norway
Keynote 4 (Day 2): Leading Beyond Today: Building Resilient Institutions Through Purpose, People and Partnerships

Prof. Daniela Pampanin leads the Biological Chemistry group and the Ecotoxicology and Environmental Monitoring groups at the University of Stavanger. Her research focuses on evaluating chemical and biological measurements to understand the sub-lethal effects of contaminants on marine organisms, using advanced molecular and omics techniques. She brings extensive expertise in environmental monitoring, ecotoxicology, and sustainable marine research.

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SPEAKER

Prof. Jane Catherine Ngila

School of Chemistry, University of New South Wales

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Prof. Jane Catherine Ngila
School of Chemistry, University of New South Wales / University of Johannesburg, Kenya
Keynote 3 (Day 2): Innovation and the Future of Higher Education Leadership

Professor Jane Catherine Ngila is a distinguished Kenyan chemist, researcher, and academic leader renowned for her contributions to nanotechnology and sustainable water purification. She is Head of the Department of Chemical Sciences at the University of Johannesburg and has served as Acting Executive Director and Vice President of the African Academy of Sciences. She has authored more than 150 peer-reviewed scientific publications and is a recipient of the African Union Kwame Nkrumah Award for Scientific Excellence and the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Award.

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SPEAKER

Prof. Esther Titilayo Akinlabi

Colorado State University, USA

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Prof. Esther Titilayo Akinlabi
Colorado State University (CSU), USA / Northumbria University
Keynote 5 (Day 3): Innovation Without Exclusion: Building Equitable Universities for the Digital Age

Prof. Esther Titilayo Akinlabi is a globally recognised mechanical engineer, researcher, and academic leader currently serving as Deputy Faculty Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange at Northumbria University. Her expertise lies in advanced manufacturing, materials engineering, and sustainable production systems. A passionate advocate for gender equality in STEM, she actively supports initiatives through organisations such as the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World and the African Academy of Sciences.

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SPEAKER

Prof. J. Goosby Smith

Pepperdine University, USA

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Prof. J. Goosby Smith
Pepperdine University, USA
Keynote 6 (Day 3): Leading Well: Creating Healthy Universities That Enable Excellence

J. Goosby Smith serves as the University's inaugural Vice President for Community Belonging and Chief Diversity Officer at Pepperdine University. With decades of experience as a faculty member, author, consultant, and speaker on workplace diversity, inclusion, belonging, and leadership development, she earned a BS in Computer Science (Spelman College), an MBA and PhD in Organizational Behavior (Case Western Reserve University), and a Master of Divinity (Interdenominational Theological Center). She is an ordained Itinerant Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and a member of Mensa and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Panel Descriptions — Day 1

WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 — EQUITY, BELONGING, SYSTEMIC CHANGE AND IMPACT

Panel 1 (Plenary Track) — Reimagining Higher Education Systems for Equity and Global Relevance

Examines how higher education systems can be restructured for equity, global relevance, and inclusive governance. Panelists bring continental and institutional perspectives on gender-responsive leadership, executive transformation, and cross-border academic collaboration.

Panelists: H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, Prof. Bolanle Akeredolu-Ale, Prof. Mamokgethi Phakeng, Prof. Thenjiwe Meyiwa

Catalyst: Prof. Beatrice Opeolu

Panel 2 (Plenary Track) — Mentorship, Sponsorship and Inclusive Leadership Pipelines

Focuses on structured mentorship frameworks, sponsorship cultures, and institutional strategies to attract, develop, and retain early-career women scholars and postgraduate researchers. Addresses how cross-sector partnerships and coaching models can accelerate women's leadership trajectories.

Panelists: Prof. Chioma Blaise Chikere, Ms. Hellen Banda-Adogo, Dr. Jabulile Msimango-Galawe, Ms. Meekness Lunga-Ayidu, Ms. Holly Futter

Catalyst: Prof. Brenda Moodley

Panel Descriptions — Day 2

THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2026 — INNOVATION & AI FOR TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Panel 3 (Plenary Track) — Intergenerational Perspectives on Digital Transformation in Higher Education

Explores how cross-generational dialogue bridges technological adoption gaps, balancing emerging AI tools, quality systems, indigenous language preservation, and inclusive learning technology. Brings together senior and early-career academics to examine digital transformation from multiple vantage points.

Panelists: Prof. Nita Inderlal Sukdeo, Dr. Edith Phalane, Dr. Sipokazi Mabuwa, Mrs. E. J. Alawode, Mrs. Mmasibidi Setaka-Bapela, Ms. Holly Futter

Catalyst: Prof. Seun Oyekola

Panel 4 (Plenary Track) — Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Universities as Drivers of Impact

Examines how women academics are translating research into spin-offs, social enterprises, and commercial innovation. Explores the enabling conditions for robust commercialisation ecosystems and the role of universities as anchors of enterprise development and social innovation.

Panelists: Ms. Nthatisi Quella, Prof. Oluwakemi Fapojuwo, Dr. Beata Buhlungu, Prof. Omobola Okoh, Dr. Lana-Ann Brady

Catalyst: Dr. Jabulile Msimango-Galawe

Guest Plenary — Creativity, Infrastructure, and Cultural Economic Value in Emerging Markets

Examines strategies for leveraging cultural capital, creative innovation, and cross-sector infrastructure to build sustainable enterprise ecosystems in emerging markets.

Speaker: Kingsley Amako

Panel Descriptions — Day 3

FRIDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2026 — HEALTH, WELLNESS AND SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

Panel 5 (*Plenary Track*) — Institutionalizing Wellbeing, Executive Resilience & Institutional Health Systems

Senior leaders discuss how institutions can embed wellbeing into governance structures, support executive resilience, and build health-affirming organisational cultures. Addresses physiological stress, occupational safety, and population health frameworks for academic environments.

Panelists: Prof. Vuyelwa Jacqueline Tembu, Prof. Emmanuella Amope Olubanke Sogebi, Prof. Mathildah Mokgatle

Catalyst: Prof. Yvonne Paul

Panel 6 (*Plenary Track*) — Global South Perspectives and Locally Relevant Global Engagement

Examines how universities in the Global South build meaningful, mutually beneficial global partnerships without compromising local relevance, humanising pedagogy, or environmental security. Connects One Health frameworks, critical pedagogy, and environmental research with global academic collaboration.

Panelists: Prof. Thasmai Dhurumraj, Prof. Tara Sabo-Attwood, Prof. Emmanuella Amope Olubanke Sogebi, Ms. Nomfundo Mhlambi

Catalyst: Ms. Lillian Ogbogoh | **Moderator:** Prof. Beatrice Opeolu

Closing Plenary — From Wellbeing to Workplace Culture: Building a Sustainable Wellness Programme for An Academic Community

Translates wellness concepts into actionable institutional policies, outlining operational steps to build long-term staff wellness programmes across university campuses.

Speaker: Prof. Tara Sabo-Attwood

Speaker Directory — Panelists (1 of 4)

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SPEAKER

Prof.Mamokgheti Phakeng

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Chief Executive Officer, Perspicuity Consulting, ZA

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[Prof. Mamokgheti Phakeng](#)
Perspicuity Consulting, South Africa
Panel 1 (Day 1): Reimagining Higher Education Systems for Equity and Global Relevance

Professor Mamokgheti Phakeng is an internationally respected South African mathematician, mathematics education researcher, and academic leader. She served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town from 2018 to 2023 and made history as the first Black South African woman to earn a PhD in Mathematics Education. Her groundbreaking research focuses on teaching and learning mathematics in multilingual classrooms. She has received numerous accolades including the Africa Education Medal and the Order of the Baobab (Silver).

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PANELIST

Prof. Chioma Blaise Chikere

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[Prof. Chioma Blaise Chikere](#)
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Panel 2 (Day 1): Mentorship, Sponsorship and Inclusive Leadership Pipelines

Professor Chioma Blaise Chikere is a distinguished Professor of Environmental Microbiology and Biotechnology and Head of the Department of Microbiology at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, and Professor Extraordinarius at UNISA. Internationally recognised for her pioneering research in bioremediation, microbial ecology, and environmental sustainability, she has authored over 60 journal articles. She earned the OWSD PhD Fellowship and her doctoral thesis received the National Universities Commission Award for Best Doctoral Thesis in Biological Sciences in Nigeria.

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PANELIST

Professor Thenjiwe Meyiwa

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[Prof. Thenjiwe Meyiwa](#)
University of Mpumalanga, South Africa
Panel 1 (Day 1): Reimagining Higher Education Systems for Equity and Global Relevance

Professor Thenjiwe Meyiwa is the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mpumalanga, an accomplished feminist scholar and academic leader with extensive experience in higher education governance and research leadership. She previously served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation at UNISA. Her research interests encompass gender studies, indigenous knowledge systems, and social change. She has supervised and graduated more than 40 masters and doctoral students.

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PANELIST

Meekness Lunga

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British Council ZA

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[Meekness Lunga-Ayidu](#)
British Council, South Africa
Panel 2 (Day 1): Mentorship, Sponsorship and Inclusive Leadership Pipelines

Meekness Lunga is a development professional with 15 years of experience in higher education and youth development. She has served with the British Council and CIEE, leading cross-sector partnerships and high-impact programmes across South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. She completed her MBA specialising in Leading International Organisations at Stellenbosch University Business School (Cum Laude) and holds an MPhil in Programme Evaluation from UCT. She is a passionate advocate for gender equality and mentors young women through Project Girls for Girls.

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PANELIST

Prof. Bolanle Akeredolu-Ale

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[Prof. Bolanle Akeredolu-Ale](#)
Pan African University, Cameroon
Panel 1 (Day 1): Reimagining Higher Education Systems for Equity and Global Relevance

Professor Bolanle Idowu Akeredolu-Ale is the first Vice-Rector of the Pan-African University and a distinguished linguist with over three decades of experience in language and communication studies. She previously served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta and has contributed significantly to English as a Foreign Language and English as Second Language research. She is committed to academic excellence, research development, and enhancing higher education across Africa.

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PANELIST

Holly Futter

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[Holly Futter](#)
Optix Africa, South Africa
Panel 2 (Day 1): Mentorship, Sponsorship and Inclusive Leadership Pipelines

Holly Futter is a passionate advocate for lifelong learning, skills development, and inclusive education, with experience spanning early childhood education, community development, corporate social responsibility, and the technology sector. Through her work at Optix, she has championed the use of technology as a tool for empowerment, behavioural change, and continuous learning. She advocates for innovative, community-driven, and technology-enabled approaches to learning that address real-world challenges and create lasting social impact.

Speaker Directory — Panelists (2 of 4)

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PANELIST

Mmasibidi Setaka-Bapela

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SADiLaR, North West University - ZA

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Mmasibidi Setaka-Bapela
North West University (SADiLaR), South Africa
Panel 3 (Day 2): Intergenerational Perspectives on Digital Transformation in Higher Education

Mmasibidi Setaka Bapela is a Digital Humanities Researcher focusing on the Sesotho language at the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR). Her research interests lie in Lexicography, Linguistics, and Digital Humanities. She facilitates workshops teaching digital methodologies to increase computational skills capacity in South Africa. She is a member of the Pan South African Language Board's Sesotho National Language Body, the North West Provincial Language Committee, and the Executive Committee of DHASA. Currently registered for a PhD on approaches for developing lexical resources for low-resourced languages.

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E.J. Alawode

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E. J. Alawode
McPherson University, Nigeria
Panel 3 (Day 2): Intergenerational Perspectives on Digital Transformation in Higher Education

E. J. Alawode is a dynamic digital advocate, communication professional, AI enthusiast, and university administrator with over 20 years of experience across media, academia, technology, and digital communities. She currently serves as the Registrar of McPherson University, Nigeria. A World Pulse Digital Changemaker, she has mentored and trained more than 7,500 women and girls in leadership, communication, and digital skills and has spoken at international events across more than 30 countries.

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Dr. Sipokazi Mabuwa

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Dr. Sipokazi Mabuwa
University of South Africa (UNISA), South Africa
Panel 3 (Day 2): Intergenerational Perspectives on Digital Transformation in Higher Education

Dr. Sipokazi Mabuwa is a Senior Lecturer in Mechanical Engineering at UNISA and an NRF Y2-rated researcher. Her research focuses on advanced materials processing, friction stir welding, aluminium-based metal matrix composites, additive manufacturing, and intelligent Industry 4.0-enabled manufacturing systems for aerospace, marine, and automotive applications. She integrates artificial intelligence and machine learning into advanced manufacturing technologies to develop innovative, sustainable engineering solutions. She is Co-founder and Coordinator of the International Conference on Applied Research and Engineering (ICARAE).

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PANELIST

Nthatisi Quella

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Harvard Center for African Studies, ZA

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Nthatisi Quella
Harvard Center for African Studies, South Africa
Panel 4 (Day 2): Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Universities as Drivers of Impact

Nthatisi Quella is the Africa Office Director at the Harvard University Center for African Studies in Johannesburg. She leads Harvard's regional strategy, partnerships, and programmes across the continent, connecting global academic resources to African universities and social impact initiatives. She managed over \$500,000 in annual grants to support student research and experiential learning in Africa. She holds a Bachelor's in Education from the National University of Lesotho and a Master's in Curriculum Development from the University of the Witwatersrand.

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PANELIST

Dr. Edith Phalane

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Dr. Edith Phalane
University of Johannesburg, South Africa
Panel 3 (Day 2): Intergenerational Perspectives on Digital Transformation in Higher Education

Dr Edith Phalane is a Research Manager at the University of Johannesburg, contributing to the Pan African Centre for Epidemics Research where she manages projects focused on HIV, AIDS, and COVID-19. Her research focuses on the long-term cardiovascular health of HIV-infected South Africans, highlighting the link between infectious and non-communicable diseases. She is passionate about community engagement and mentoring young learners, actively supporting initiatives such as the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists.

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PANELIST

Prof. Oluwakemi Fapojuwo

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Prof. Oluwakemi Fapojuwo
Federal University of Agriculture (FUNAAB), Nigeria
Panel 4 (Day 2): Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Universities as Drivers of Impact

Prof. Oluwakemi Enitan Fapojuwo is a Professor of Agricultural Extension Administration at the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, with over two decades of experience in teaching, research, and community development. Her work focuses on agricultural extension systems, rural sociology, and gender mainstreaming, particularly in supporting smallholder farmers and improving the livelihoods of rural women. She has published widely and is deeply committed to mentorship, training, and advancing gender equality in agricultural and community-based institutions.

Speaker Directory — Panelists (3 of 4)

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PANELIST



Dr. Jabulile Msimango-Galawe

University of Witswatersrand | Wits Business School, ZA

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Dr. Jabulile Msimango-Galawe
Wits Business School, South Africa
Panel 4 (Day 2): Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Universities as Drivers of Impact

Dr. Jabulile (DrJ) Msimango-Galawe is the Managing Director of DrJ Business Support and co-founder of the African Institute for Entrepreneurship (AlfE). She is a senior lecturer in entrepreneurship and Programme Director of the Master of Management – Business and Executive Coaching at Wits Business School. An award-winning author and entrepreneur, she published *Dear Mr Entrepreneurship* in 2022 and co-authored its second volume with 13 aspiring businesswomen leaders. She holds a PhD in Entrepreneurship from Wits Business School.

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Prof. Omobola Okoh

University of Fort Hare, ZA

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Prof. Omobola Okoh
University of Fort Hare, South Africa
Panel 4 (Day 2): Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Universities as Drivers of Impact

Professor Omobola Oluranti Okoh is a Professor of Analytical and Environmental Chemistry at the University of Fort Hare and a C2-rated researcher. Her research spans environmental chemistry, water and wastewater treatment, nanotechnology, and renewable energy. She leads the Synthetic, Environmental and Applied Chemistry Research Group (SEACREG) and has supervised 16 PhD graduates. With more than 106 peer-reviewed publications and over 6,200 citations, she is a recipient of the UFH Vice-Chancellor's Senior Research Award and the 2025 SAMRC Scientific Silver Merit Award in Public Health.

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Dr Beata Buhlungu

Gordon Institute of Business

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Dr. Beata Buhlungu
Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), South Africa
Panel 4 (Day 2): Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Universities as Drivers of Impact

Dr. Beata Buhlungu is an accomplished economic sociologist, researcher, and higher education executive with over 20 years of experience in academia, research, policy, and international relations. Her work focuses on international business, South-South foreign direct investment, and the socioeconomic impact of South African multinational enterprises in African host countries. She has held senior leadership positions at Nelson Mandela University, UCT, the University of the Free State, and the Council on Higher Education.

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Prof. Yvonne Paul

Tshwane University of Technology - ZA

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Prof. Yvonne Paul
Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa
Panel 5 (Day 3): Institutionalizing Wellbeing, Executive Resilience & Institutional Health Systems

Professor Yvonne Paul is a leading expert in Sport Science, Biokinetics, and Health & Wellness promotion at Tshwane University of Technology. She drives research in health promotion, therapeutic exercise, rehabilitative treatment, and performance enhancement, establishing interdisciplinary links across Nursing Sciences, Performing Arts, and Business programmes. She holds a PhD in Sport Science and Physiology specialising in Diabetes Mellitus and Exercise from the University of Pretoria and has received international recognition through multiple keynote and chairperson invitations at national and international conferences.

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PANELIST



Lana-Ann Brady

Durban University of Technology, ZA

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Lana-Ann Brady
Durban University of Technology, South Africa
Panel 4 (Day 2): Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Universities as Drivers of Impact

Lana-Ann Brady is a distinguished entrepreneurship educator, academic, thought leader, certified trainer and business mentor with more than three decades of experience in entrepreneurship education, enterprise development and entrepreneurial capacity building. A specialist in Circular Economy and Sustainability, she combines entrepreneurial thinking, responsible innovation and sustainable value creation. Her contribution has received international recognition, including presenting at the Leadership Programme of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russia.

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Prof. Vuyelwa Jacqueline-Tembu

Tshwane University of Technology - ZA

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Prof. Vuyelwa Jacqueline Tembu
Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa
Panel 5 (Day 3): Institutionalizing Wellbeing, Executive Resilience & Institutional Health Systems

Professor Jacqueline Tembu is an Associate Professor, Research Scientist, and Head of the Department of Chemistry at Tshwane University of Technology. She earned her PhD in Chemistry from the University of Surrey and an MBA in Education Management from Hagaa-Helia School of Applied Science, Finland. Her research focuses on identifying novel natural compounds from traditional medicinal plants in southern Africa and screening against diseases such as triple-negative breast cancer. She leads the Centre for Applied Chemistry Research (CACRE) at TUT and is a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Speaker Directory — Panelists (4 of 4)

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PANELIST

Prof. Emmanuella Amope
Olubanke Sogebi

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Prof. Emmanuella Amope Olubanke Sogebi
Federal University of Agriculture (FUNAAB), Nigeria
Panel 5 (Day 3): Institutionalizing Wellbeing, Executive Resilience & Institutional Health Systems | Panel 6 (Day 3): Global South Perspectives and Locally Relevant Global Engagement

Professor Emmanuella A. Olubanke Sogebi is a distinguished Veterinary Anaesthesiologist, researcher, educator, and academic leader with nearly two decades of experience in veterinary medicine. She earned her DVM and MVSc from the University of Ibadan and a PhD in Veterinary Anaesthesiology from FUNAAB. Her expertise spans veterinary anaesthesia, pain management, and animal welfare. She has published over 33 scholarly articles, edited six conference proceedings, and serves on the Board of Directors of the International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management.

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PANELIST

Nomfundo Mhlambi

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uMngeni-uThukela Water - ZA

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Nomfundo Mhlambi
uMngeni-uThukela Water, South Africa
Panel 6 (Day 3): Global South Perspectives and Locally Relevant Global Engagement

Nomfundo Mhlambi is a dedicated science and engineering professional associated with Umgeni Water, with a strong commitment to environmental sustainability and water resource management. Her work focuses on the impact of microplastics pollution in aquatic ecosystems, contributing to a growing body of research aimed at addressing environmental challenges and protecting water resources. She is passionate about engineering, continuous learning, and making a meaningful impact in the sector.

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PANELIST

Prof. Mathildah Mokgatle

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Prof. Mathildah Mokgatle
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), South Africa
Panel 5 (Day 3): Institutionalizing Wellbeing, Executive Resilience & Institutional Health Systems

Professor Mathildah Mokgatle is an NRF C2-rated public health scientist, Professor, and Head of the Department of Public Health at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. With more than 17 years of academic leadership, she has supervised and graduated over 80 master's and 10 doctoral candidates. Her research interests include sexual and reproductive health, HIV and STI prevention, population health, and health systems strengthening. She served on the South African Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19, where her evidence-based contributions informed national public health policy.

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PANELIST

Lillian Ogbogoh

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Identity Recalibration Specialist, UK

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Lillian Ogbogoh
Identity Recalibration Specialist, UK
Panel 6 (Day 3): Global South Perspectives and Locally Relevant Global Engagement

Lillian Ogbogoh is an international speaker, transformational storyteller, and certified NeuroChange Practitioner who helps high-achieving women stop over-functioning, overcome self-doubt, and lead with authenticity. As a certified NeuroChange Practitioner and Master NLP Practitioner, she combines behavioural science, storytelling, and identity-level transformation to help individuals reshape limiting beliefs and unlock their full leadership potential. She has delivered keynotes for the UK Civil Service, NatWest, and the Ministry of Justice, and hosts the podcast *In Her Own Name*.

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PANELIST

Prof. Tara Sabo-Attwood

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Prof. Tara Sabo-Attwood
University of South Carolina, USA
Panel 6 (Day 3): Global South Perspectives and Locally Relevant Global Engagement

Tara Sabo-Attwood is an environmental toxicologist and professor focusing on how pollutants affect human health and ecosystems, including emerging risks such as nanoparticles. She is the founding director of the "Promoting Happy, Healthy People" programme and has contributed to designing therapeutic outdoor spaces such as the UF Health Children's Healing Garden. Her work integrates environmental science, public health, and wellness initiatives, advancing knowledge on the intersection between humans and their environment.

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PANELIST

Kirsten Garbini

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DINEO Pact

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Kirsten Garbini
DINEO Pact, South Africa
Panel 3 (Day 2): Intergenerational Perspectives on Digital Transformation in Higher Education

Kirsten Garbini is the Founder and CEO of DINEO Pact, helping organisations change behaviour at scale, accelerate AI adoption and translate new capability into measurable business performance. Drawing on more than 20 years of experience in executive leadership, management consulting and culture interventions, she designs enterprise change and adoption ecosystems that connect learning, knowledge sharing, social influence and practical application. Her PhD research explores Communities of Practice as spaces for deep learning, belonging, knowledge sharing and sustained innovation.

Guest Plenary

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GUEST
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Kingsley Amako

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African Fashion and Arts Awards, NG

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Kingsley Amako
African Fashion and Arts Awards (AFAA), Nigeria
Guest Plenary (Day 2): Creativity, Infrastructure, and Cultural Economic Value in Emerging Markets

Kingsley Amako is a Pan-African creative strategist, cultural entrepreneur, and Founder and CEO of the African Fashion and Arts Award (AFAA). With nearly two decades of experience in the creative and cultural industries, he has dedicated his career to empowering African creatives and positioning Africa's fashion and arts sectors as powerful drivers of economic growth and cultural diplomacy. Through strategic partnerships and initiatives such as the AFAA Innovation Hub, he champions youth empowerment and skills development for young Africans.

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SHINE Skills Center

SHINE (Susan's Hub for Innovation, Nurturing and Empowerment) is a women-focused skills development initiative that empowers women and girls with practical skills, entrepreneurship training, mentorship, and certified learning opportunities. Based in Cape Town with plans to expand across Africa, SHINE helps women turn skills into sustainable livelihoods, independence, and opportunity.

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General Information & Venue

Venue & Dates

UCT GSB Protea by Marriott

Waterfront, Cape Town, South Africa

Wednesday 16 – Friday 18 September 2026

Dress Code

Smart business / business casual for all sessions. **African or Colorful attire** required for the Summit Dinner & Awards Evening (Day 2, 18:30).

Meals

Morning refreshments, lunch, and afternoon tea are provided for all registered delegates on all three days.

Registration

Delegates are requested to register on arrival each morning. Name badges must be worn at all times throughout the venue.

Wi-Fi

Complimentary Wi-Fi is available throughout the venue. Connection details will be provided at registration.

Photography & Recording

Sessions may be photographed and recorded for WLHE communications. Please notify the organising team if you have any concerns.

Contact

For enquiries, visit wlhe-summit.co.za or contact the WLHE Organising Committee directly.