

Brief bio: Dr Thandi Mgwebi

Thandi Mgwebi is Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for Research, Innovation and internationalization at Nelson Mandela University in South Africa. She was the former Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), Director of Research at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Prior to her appointment at UWC, she was the Executive Director of the South African Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence at the National Research Foundation responsible for designing and implementing numerous policies, organisational strategies involving the management and mentoring of multicultural teams, establishing and guiding multi-sectoral partnerships and networks. Thandi was the founding Director of the Southern African Systems Analysis Centre (SASAC), an initiative of the Department of Science and Innovation, the NRF and the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). She has served as co-chairperson for the 2017 World Sustainability Forum that was held in Cape Town, South Africa. She is an insightful leader in the SA Higher Education landscape, served in the Ministerial task team member for design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a National Mathematical Sciences Programme and most recently, as a team leader in the Ministerial task team investigating the progression of black academics in public higher education institutions in South Africa. She has featured in many international forums for research management and practice in higher education. Thandi has provided training on research and grant management to a range of stakeholders in and outside South Africa including her role as trainer and facilitator for Objective 1 of the Science Granting Council Initiative (SGCI) in Africa. Thandi is an advocate of science and has concluded significant international partnerships that have leveraged financial and in-kind support to the national science agenda.

Thandi was the founding Board Chair of Amaya Space, a commercial nanosatellite company of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. She continues to serve in various advisory boards for science capacity building initiatives in and outside South Africa. She currently serves in the Advisory Board of the French-South Africa Scholarship Programme, managed by the French Embassy in South Africa.

She is also a council member of the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences, a pan -African network of Centres of Excellence for post-graduate training in mathematical sciences, research and public engagement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Thandi serves in the Leadership Council of the newly established SDSN South Africa. The SDSN mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development, including the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Thandi holds a PhD in Medical Cell & Developmental Biology from the University of Cape Town (UCT), a Management Development Programme Certificate from the University of Stellenbosch Business School (GSB) and a postgraduate qualification in Tertiary Education Management from the University of Melbourne, Australia. Part of her PhD work on mesenchyme-epithelial transformation of corneal endothelium on transgenic mouse models was spent at the MRC Centre for Neurobiology at University College, London (UCL). She completed her postdoctoral research fellowship at the Institute of Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine, UCT. Thandi holds a certificate on Business Sustainability Management from the University of Cambridge, UK.

