



The US Witsie



Wits Fund Newsletter April 2025

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AS THE SEASONS SHIFT AND WILFLOWERS BLOOM, spring arrives with a gentle reminder to stay hopeful, grateful, and to find joy in the beauty that surrounds us. In that same spirit, we hope this April newsletter brings you happiness—not only in the stories we share, but in celebrating the joy and accomplishments of fellow alumni.

JOY ON GRADUATION DAY
Wits Staff Member Realizes Lifelong Dream



Former call centre agent Oliver Niewenhuys has achieved a family dream by completing a BA in Organisational Psychology and Management, with distinction.

The youngest of four brothers received his degree awarded during the 2025 autumn graduation season. This academic journey was a personal mission – a gift to self and future generations.

Joy was palpable on his graduation day, flanked by his family and partner, Bonnita, whom he describes as his never-ending source of encouragement.

Starting out as a call centre agent, Niewenhuys joined Wits in July 2015 at the Student Call Centre under the Student Enrolment Centre. Six years later he transitioned to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management as a Faculty Administrative Officer, and recently took up a position as a Postgraduate Faculty Officer.

“I am from Reiger Park, Boksburg, and come from a close-knit family. Our journey has been shaped by both challenges and resilience. After losing my father to cancer, my mother took on the immense responsibility of raising us on her own. Despite financial constraints, she instilled in us the values of perseverance and determination,” he says.

It is this background that saw all four brothers complete matric and strive for

independence. “Further education was not an immediate option for my siblings and I, due to financial limitations,” he adds.

Read more of Oliver's heartwarming story [here](#).

WORLD-RENOWNED WITS STERKFORTEIN CAVES RE-OPEN





Wits University announces the reopening of one of humanity's most important palaeontological sites to the public.

The world-renowned [Wits Sterkfontein Caves](#) reopened to the public in April 2025. This development marks a new chapter for one of humanity's most important palaeontological sites, as it transitions to full management under Wits

University.

Located within the Cradle of Humankind UNESCO World Heritage Site near Johannesburg, the [Sterkfontein Caves](#) have yielded some of the most important hominin fossil discoveries including the iconic "Mrs Ples" (1947) and "Little Foot" (1997) in addition to the hundreds of other fossils of human relatives. These discoveries have been crucial to informing the global understanding of human evolution and the origins of humanity.

Whilst previously serving primarily as a tourist destination, attracting thousands of international and local visitors, the reimagined [Wits Sterkfontein Caves](#) will offer a more immersive research and educational experience, bringing visitors closer to the science that has defined the site for nearly 100 years.

Read more [here](#).



WATCH | Inside the Wits Sterkfontein Caves: Step into the depths of time at the reopened world-famous Wits Sterkfontein Caves—home to some of the oldest hominin fossils ever discovered. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is at the heart of paleoanthropological research, where legends like Mrs Ples and Little Foot continue to shape our understanding of human evolution.

WITS ACCOUNTANCY GRADUATES TAKE TOP HONORS IN CHARTED ACCOUNTANCY EXAM



The Wits University Margo Steele School of Accountancy continues to lead the way in South African accountancy education. Its graduates demonstrated exceptional competence in the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) Initial Assessment of Competence (IAC) examination, the rigorous professional assessment for qualifying as a Chartered Accountant (CA) in South Africa.

Witsies proudly secured multiple places in the Top 10 — led by Tana Herson, who achieved First Place nationally, with Honors. Joining her in the Top 10 were Trinity Masiakwala in Fourth Place (with Honors) and Bilal Said, who ranked Ninth (with Honors).

Two more candidates—Rumaanah Dangor and Morale Kutumela—also earned Honors passes, reflecting the School's consistent track record of academic excellence.

Professor Jason Cohen, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, said: "The Faculty is exceptionally proud of all our IAC candidates. We congratulate them, along with their lecturers and tutors, for their remarkable performance.

"Our results show that Wits maintains its longstanding reputation for attracting top school leavers and producing top achievers in the IAC (previously ITC) exam who go on to become among the best CAs and top business leaders in the country and globally."

Read more [here](#).

RESEARCHERS DEVELOP PIONEERING TESTING FOR DEMENTIA



International researchers have introduced two improved tests that could precisely detect cognitive dysfunction in older African adults.

Wits researchers are part of an interdisciplinary team (including collaborators from Harvard and Columbia universities in the United States) working on this ground-breaking project.

These new tools, part of a comprehensive set of 29 assessments, improve on conventional dementia evaluations commonly used in developed regions.

Experts say the initiative will fill critical gaps in global ageing studies, offering vital insights into dementia prevalence and cognitive health in under-represented populations.

Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to have a dramatic rise in dementia prevalence by 2050 owing to an increasing ageing population. In South Africa, in particular, more than one million people could be living with dementia in the upcoming decades, solidifying what is known about the significant community, social, and economic impact of dementia in rural areas.

The highly specialized tests tailored for the South African context will show additional neuropsychological, functional, and biomarker indicators to measure dementia in already cognitively impaired study participants.

Read more [here](#).



See Wits University in Action!

Want a closer look at life on campus?
For a Virtual Tour of Your Old Haunts, Click [here](#).

As we feel gratitude for the blessings in our lives, one way to pay it forward is through making an impact in a person's life that will uplift them, and their families, for generations to come.

DONATE [HERE](#)



NEW PODCAST ALERT- Wits is excited to introduce the #HackYourFuture podcast, a new series that delves into the stories of some of the most pioneering minds from its ranks. Hosted by Melusi Ncala, a blind Wits graduate whose resilience and determination has made him a beacon of inspiration, the podcast highlights the incredible journeys of Wits alumni and faculty who have overcome obstacles to drive change and shape the future. Watch and Listen [here](#).

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Vision

To ensure that Wits University remains one of Africa's – and the world's – pre-eminent research-intensive educational institutions, with top academic standards, committed faculty, and supportive alumni.

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