



The US Witsie

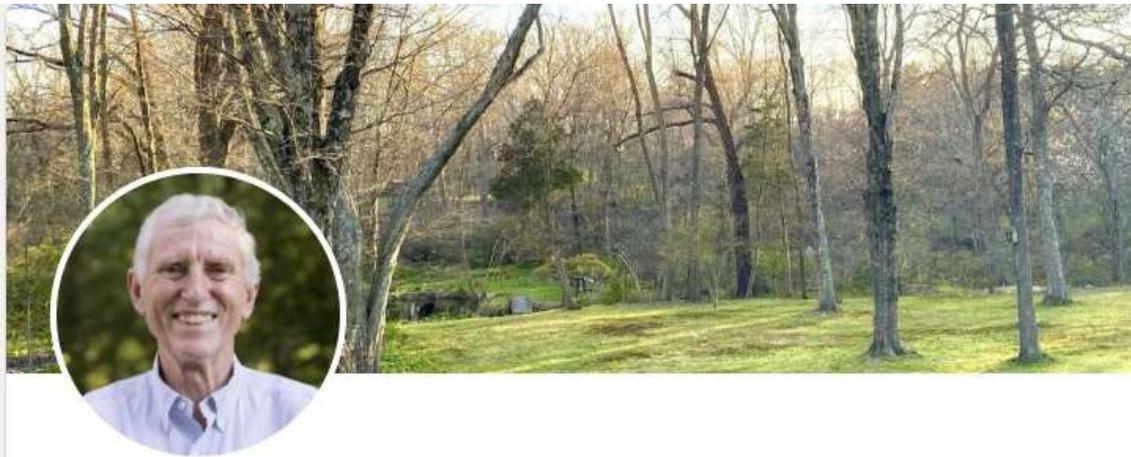


Wits Fund Newsletter January 2026

witsfund.org

Read more about [Wits today](#).

IN THE END, ONLY KINDNESS MATTERS



Our Treasurer, Robin Fryer CPA, FCCA, CA(SA), recently shared a beautiful reflection on the holiday season on [LinkedIn](#). With his kind permission, we share it with you below:

The other day, growing tired of the continuous Christmas music on the radio, I tossed an old CD into my car's CD player—yes, my car is also old and has one. The CD is a medley of songs written by singer-songwriters, some famous, others less so. Around the middle of the CD is a song I had long forgotten: "Hands" by Jewel (Kilcher), the last song she wrote for her second

album, *Spirit*, released in 1998.

It is certainly not a Christmas song, but for me it captures the meaning of this season perfectly well. Jewel sings most of the lyrics softly, and the words are hard to follow—at least while driving a car. However, around the middle of this four-minute ballad, Jewel raises her soprano voice to deliver this chorus:

In the end only kindness matters
In the end only kindness matters

Having now read the lyrics (and watched the music video recorded for the song's release, which dramatically portrays the meaning of this chorus), I can share that the song conveys her deep faith in God. It reflects a moment that transformed her life; you can read about that, and why the song is titled "Hands," on Google if you're interested.

All I can say is that this chorus resonated with me and feels especially appropriate at this time of year in a world facing daunting challenges.

And what gave me immense hope was that the Wits Fund was able to send substantial sums to Wits - Wits alumni showing that kindness matters. Members of the Wits Fund board and I grew up in worlds of different faiths but it matters not - if you are committed to good work that is what matters.

Let's not forget:

In the end, only kindness matters.

Wits Welcomes Top 2026 Applicants - Finding Your Why



Wits University recently hosted its annual Top Applicants Function, welcoming some of the most outstanding applicants for 2026 to campus. The event gave prospective students the chance to experience Wits firsthand, meet the university's deans, and interact with lecturers and researchers.

Finding purpose in a changing world

In his address, Wits Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Zebulon Vilakazi, spoke about the future that awaits the next generation of Wits students. "Whether you study engineering, medicine, law, economics, psychology or physics, what matters is that you find your why. Your why is your true north, your centre," he said.

He emphasized the importance of using skills ethically in a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence. "AI, like all other scientific machines, does not have a conscience of its own. It is us who impose that conscience on them. Therefore, we need to utilize these tools in a very ethical way."

Read more [here](#), and WATCH the VC's welcome video below.



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Chemistry to Commerce to Market Innovations



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WATCH Keynote for SACI-45, 45th National Convention of the South African Chemical Institute

"Chemistry to Commerce: Turning Lab Breakthroughs into Market Innovations" by Dr David Fine.

From making air travel safer to detecting chemicals that can cause cancer, from developing advanced technologies for finding buried landmines, the curiosity of Dr David Fine, a Wits University alumnus and donor, has resulted in innovations that have impacted on society for over 45 years.

"This interview is fascinating and I hope our audience makes the effort to watch it. Amazing advice for so many features of life , to read a book watch a movie etc.— develop your own thoughts and analysis before looking at reviews and opinions of 'experts'.", said Mr John Teeger, Vice-Chair of the Wits Fund.

And read more about the David and Angela Fine Chair in Innovation at Wits [here](#).

Google Wits PhD Fellowships Awarded



Jess Rees and Tristan Bester (above) have been awarded the highly competitive 2025 Google PhD Fellowship.

The fellowship recognizes exceptional PhD students from the [School of Computer Science and Applied Mathematics \(CSAM\) at Wits University](#), whose research shows strong potential for groundbreaking scientific contributions and meaningful societal impact, particularly through advances in computing.

Selected through a rigorous international process, Google PhD Fellows are supported for pursuing innovative research in areas such as machine learning and artificial intelligence, and are recognized not only for academic excellence but also for the ambition to tackle real-world challenges and help shape the future of technology.

Advancing AI for healthcare: Jess Rees

Jess Rees is supervised by Distinguished Professor Bruce Bassett from CSAM, and has been recognized for her research on the use of AI in medicine, with a particular focus on improving clinical diagnosis and strengthening healthcare systems in South Africa.

Strengthening the foundations of AI: Tristan Bester

Tristan Bester received the Google PhD Fellowship for his work in machine learning foundations, particularly at the intersection of reinforcement learning and symbolic AI.

Read more [here](#).

Wits Fund "Give the Gift of Graduation" Campaign



At Wits University in Johannesburg, South Africa, education transforms lives. Every year, thousands of students stand on the threshold of achievement — ready to step into their future.

But for some, the final hurdle is financial.

You can be the reason that they cross that stage.

Your gift unlocks potential, celebrates perseverance, and honors years of dedication.

Be part of their success story.

Give the gift of graduation.

www.witsfund.org/gift

How does the GGG work?



You can help the next generation cross the finish line. And help create a self-sustaining cycle of success at Wits.

Many students complete their degrees but can't graduate because they owe R15,000 or less. Your support expands Wits' last-mile loan fund and every repaid loan supports the next student.

Give once. Change dozens of futures.

Ways to give:

- \$800 one-time
- 8 monthly gifts of \$100
- 16 monthly gifts of \$50

Give the Gift of Graduation at <https://witsfund.org/gift/>





See Wits University in Action!

Want a closer look at life on campus?
For a Virtual Tour of Your Old Haunts, Click [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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Missed one of the previous newsletters? Here they are, on one page: <https://witsfund.org/latest/>

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