

# Our future engineers



Ukuqonda students at a function to meet the Xstrata Alloys CEO at the company's head office

Professor Piet Human left Stellenbosch University in 1995 to devote his life to empowering young people with skills that will help them make a positive contribution to the country.

As he puts it: "We live in an enormously rich country in terms of mineral resources and people, but we are not yet managing to use these resources properly."

His contribution to enriching the country's potential and resources can be seen in the work he has done in the past seven years at the Ukuqonda Tertiary Bridging Programme in Rustenburg.

The programme, which was officially launched in 2004, has a pass rate of over 80% with most graduates enrolling into universities to further their studies. This has made Ukuqonda one of the most successful post-matric programmes in the country, with a high demand for enrolment each year.

Ukuqonda not only focuses on Mathematics and Science, but also provides assistance with other subjects and life skills training that will help the students once they leave the programme. Professor Human emphasised that the programme seeks to close the large gap between secondary and tertiary education and reduce the first year drop out rate.

"We run a very strict programme which ensures that an A student stays an A student and can handle the load of work that is thrown at them at universities," said Human.

With so many potential engineers and scientists at Ukuqonda, it's not surprising that Xstrata Alloys came on board to fund the programme.

Group General Manager Community Social Responsibility, Steve Makgoba explained that one of the reasons Xstrata supports this programme is because of concern over the shortfall of qualified engineers in the country.

An aspiring civil engineering student from Rustenburg, Busisiwe Phinda speaks highly of the programme which she joined while she was in Grade 10. Besides the knowledge she has gained academically, Phinda says she's more thankful for the life skills lessons she learnt which have made her a more confident person.

"More than anything, Ukuqonda has taught me that I can do anything and be whoever I want to be through

believing in my talents and myself," said Phinda. "I now know that I have leadership qualities that I never knew existed, and one day I will run my own company and give back to my community the way that they are doing right now."

Though Phinda doesn't have a bursary yet, she's hopeful that her good grades and determination will work in her favour to secure financial assistance. She plans to study and work part-time to increase her chances of getting a job once she completes her degree.

"I joined Ukuqonda because I didn't want to throw myself in the deep end by rushing to university. I will leave here as a more powerful person and the people at university will be shocked," said Phinda.

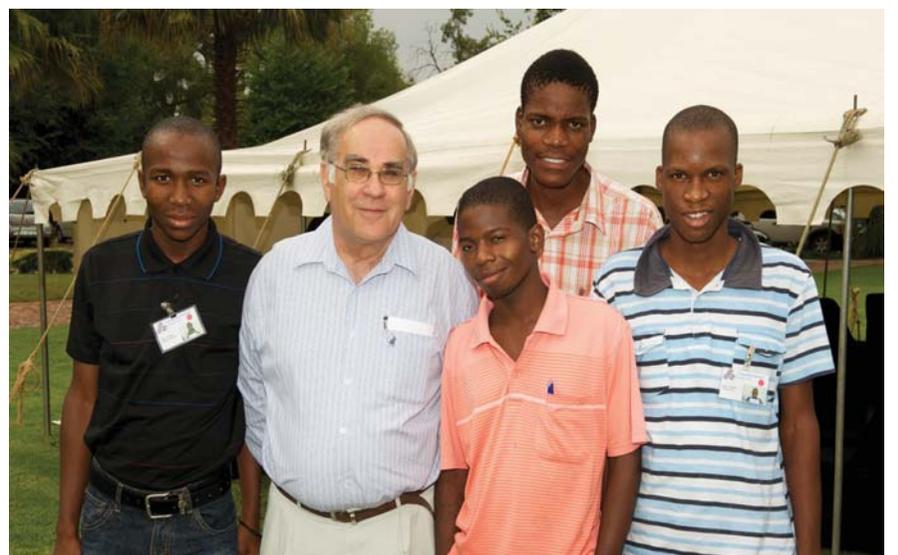
Fellow student Thabang Mohlala, also an engineering student, said it feels good to be part of a programme that helps them determine their own careers.

"Our teachers don't spoon feed us; we are taught to do things for ourselves and tackle challenges like big boys and girls. This has helped me to see the great potential that I have," said Mohlala.

"We are helping these young people become the writers of their own stories," adds Human.



Xstrata Alloys CSI Manager Steve Makgoba (standing left), Xstrata Alloys CEO Peet Nienaber (third right, standing), Prof Piet Human, Principal of Ukuqonda (second from right) together with students and teachers from the programme



Prof Piet Human with some of the students