

WOMEN'S MONTH

DR NOSIPHIWO DELUBOM

Dr Nosiphiwo Delubom is woman spearheading meaningful change at Nelson Mandela University as the head of Department of the Universal Accessibility and Disability Services unit. She is an exceptional leader, proactive and altruistic in her mission to advocate for persons with disabilities and their right to education and equal career prospects.

Dr Nosiphiwo Delubom, started her journey as an educator at a rural school in the 90s and after a personal experience with a family who refused to allow their visually impaired child to attend school, her intrinsic passion for inclusive and equal education for all was ignited. She spent her youth working in the education system having suspected herself of having an undiagnosed learning disability, this experience was the beginning that led to her taking a more proactive step.

She received her honours degree in special needs and support services, and she later pursued a PhD in Inclusive Education. Her experience, educational background, and aspiration to change the education system by removing barriers and increasing accessibility through infrastructural reform had transformed her into an advocational warrior and transformational leader.

Dr Delubom exemplifies the strength and resilience of women and the impact an individual can make with the right mindset. She forms part of the Higher Education and Disability Service Association (HEDSA) executive committee as the national chairperson.

Heading strategic planning, which aligns with the Mandela university values, she continues her pursuit of ensuring that people with disabilities have equal access and opportunities in both education and the job market. Despite facing continuous resistance from various stakeholders with the implementation of inclusive practices, she has never been deterred from her goal, and it has only fuelled the fire.

Her fire will continue to burn, as long as gaps in inclusive learning and teaching for those with a disability exist. Her dedication to the cause is widely recognised and appreciated as she chairs the Integrated Student Support Services sub-committee [ND1] of the Ikhala TVET college council. The Eastern Cape Regional Disability Collaboration (ECRDC) recognised her disability advocacy with the “Honorary Award for Disability Advocacy” at their annual workshop.

Even with the prestigious awards and recognition received, she prides her success on her faith, introspection and the ability to see the difference that advocacy has made in the accessibility and inclusivity space. Dr Delubom’s work is not centred on establishing a space for person living with a disability, but on the inclusion of people with disabilities within the environments they find themselves in.

“In my view, a human being is human despite categorisation in terms of gender, ability or image. So, when advocating for disability inclusion, I focus on us as people.” - Dr Nosiphiwo Delubom