

The UKZN Griot Of Traffic and Rankings

"First World War fighter pilots had a longer life-span than do columnists working at UKZN," was one of the responses I got to my first column.



WORDS: KEYAN G TOMASELLI

The other one was from my mum. She wanted to know about the subtext of my argument. Greg Arde, a *Sunday Tribune* columnist, made some point about mug shots of Senate members. Colleagues in my office laughed uproariously. So much for my apprehension. So this month I venture deeper into unknown and contentious territory.

First, was the massive pothole that disrupted traffic in April after exiting Howard College's main gate. It was so wide and deep and there for so long that a family of stray Great Danes made it their hidey-hole. The cops of course ignored the hole, and ticketed cars parked on the islands, while others checked on taxis. Between the pothole, the police sweeps, and inconsiderate drivers blocking both entrances and exits, somehow life (but not work) went on.

Second, *Finweek* in March published an article ranking South African universities. UKZN featured between three and five, but dropped off the scale with regard to permanent staff with a D-level qualification. We came in at number ten in the percentage of NRF rated researchers. A great swishing of gowns was heard from the top executive on the release of these obviously incomprehensible results written by financial journalists who can't count.

My own explanation for this extremely poor showing is that too many staff are wasting too much of their time trying to get into, or out of, Howard College. Further, the endless driving between campuses in two cities on a highway that is constantly clogged with UKZN staff is also adding to road congestion. This is why the heavies use Field's Hill. For them, there are too many educated commuters on the N3 who speak funny, driving cars they can't afford.

My suggestion is that *Finweek* rather develop indicators to explain the relationship between all the time spent by UKZN staff in traffic jams and our lack of higher degrees. The rating matter will need another indicator, the ratio of staff to students in specific Schools. If the stats don't work for us just change the assumptions – we go for reverse indicators. So, instead of the number of rated researchers being a positive indicator of university ranking,

the lack of them should be understood to indicate our contribution to attending to transport matters as we contemplate the excessive amount of time we all spend driving on the N3. Besides, the extraordinary effort and time needed to make sense of the ratings forms would be much better utilised writing up and publishing time and motion studies. So much so, that UKZN staff would fill every journal on the topic.

I am an expert on traffic. My students spend a lot of time driving me all over the Kalahari on lengthy research excursions. They drive and I write. We huddle in the back seat of my huge 4x4 working on my laptop while on tarred roads. (Can't work off road, it's too bumpy.) As my appreciative passengers will reveal, they supply me with an inexhaustible supply of intellectual labour when I am checking their theses, debating with them my articles in-the-making, and discussing field notes. I get far more writing done in the back of my 4x4 than I do in my office. The only interruptions are Shell Quickstops when the students bolt from the vehicles to get their two-hourly fixes of junk food, froth and fizzy drinks. On returning to the car, they all make a bee-line for the single front seat so they don't have to work with me in the back where they get car sick and educated simultaneously. Amongst my research budget line items are lots of packets and deodorant sprays.

Now, I can easily quantify the number of kilometres travelled in relation to the outputs of theses, articles, chapters and books written by both me and my students. So the solution to UKZN's showing on national researcher ratings, university rankings and the lack of Ds is to ensure that all cars driving between cities are equipped with laptops on which the passengers are required to prepare publications.

Thus time + vehicle x kms = SAPSE output = research income = higher ranking. Could anything be simpler? What with hundreds of UKZN staff using the roads so productively every day we'd soon outstrip those pesky one-campus wonders like Wits, UWC, UCT, Pretoria and SU that have pipped us to the rankings post.

QED

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COMEDY OF ERRORS Is Quite a Laugh!

Drama and Performance Studies' production of *The Comedy of Errors* gave new meaning to the saying: laughter is the best medicine.

WORDS: LUNGA MEMELA

The production was part of Drama and Performance Studies' annual Shakespeare Festival and the University's Centenary Celebrations.

Directors Ms Tamar Meskin, Mr Rowin Munsamy and Professor Mervyn McMurtry alongside a well rehearsed cast of 55 students located 'Ephesus' in our very own 'eThekweni', with much ado about the anticipated FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup.

Played by Mr Brett Collopy, Mr David Wilson, Ms Silindile Hlengwa and Ms Noxolo Malimba, two sets of twins are tragically separated at birth and set on a farcical trail of mistaken

identities and a series of mind-boggling events. Much to their dismay, unprecedented help is received from their fellow citizens of 'eThekweni' which leads them straight back to each other's arms as brothers and sisters after an eventful night.

Convincing roles were played by Ms Derosha Moodley, Mr Brandon Moulder, Ms Kivithra Naicker and the cast as a whole. Cameo performances by Ms Donna Steel, Ms Megan Nevels, Mr Devin Möller, the prostitutes and the nuns made for a good laugh. *The Comedy of Errors* showed a high standard of commitment and dedication from both students and lecturers.



Cast members pose at the Moses Mabhida Stadium, their adapted setting for their production of William Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*.

Sudoku

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5	6			4		3		
4	7	3						
			5					6
8			7				9	
					1	8		5
		5				1	2	
	2				8		6	
3	1					9	5	

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