



KLAUS-JÜRGEN BATHE LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS

NEWSLETTER

December 2025

A Tradition of Excellence: The Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Engineering Scholarships at UCT

For nearly three decades, the scholarships have recognised exceptional ability and dedication, supporting future engineers who embody UCT's highest ideals.

Since 1997, Professor Klaus-Jürgen Bathe has generously supported undergraduate engineering scholarships in the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment at UCT. Each year, these awards honour outstanding students in their final two years of study who demonstrate exceptional academic ability and a commitment to excellence in their chosen field.

Reflecting on his connection to UCT, Prof. K. J. Bathe said: "I decided to start the awards because I love UCT and am thankful to UCT. I obtained an excellent education, which laid the foundation for my later achievements. The faculty, led by Prof M. F. Kaplan as Dean and Head of the Department of Civil Engineering, was excellent. "

Over the years, many remarkable students have benefited from this initiative.

- **Dr Reuben Govender** (2000 scholar) went on to complete his PhD and now teaches Design, Mechanics and Manufacturing in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at UCT.

- **Benjamin Meltzer** (2010 scholar) graduated in Mechatronics and completed his MSc in Biomedical Engineering degree specialising in Neurotechnology at Imperial College of London in 2014. He co-founded *Aerobotics*, a global agri-tech company that uses AI and aerial imagery to help farmers optimise yields.
- **Phuthi Tsatsi** (2016 scholar) graduated in Electrical Engineering and completed a dual degree—MBA and MSc Electrical Engineering at Stanford University in 2024.
- **Romy Stevens** (2023 scholar) graduated in Chemical Engineering and is now pursuing her master's degree at Cambridge University in Advanced Materials for the Energy Transition.

Their journeys reflect the transformative impact of Prof. K. J. Bathe's generosity — an enduring legacy that continues to inspire excellence and innovation among UCT's engineering students.



Dr Reuben Govender

"During my third year, I received the notification that I had been awarded the Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Scholarship. I had been unsuccessful in applying for bursaries till that point, and as a student who transferred to UCT in 2nd year, hadn't been eligible for any of the entrance scholarships or merit awards. Receiving the K.J. Bathe scholarship was really impactful for me, as I had felt that my academic efforts hadn't been recognised by funders to that point. I was tremendously grateful for the financial assistance from this scholarship. The scholarship took on greater meaning during my postgraduate studies, as I was pursuing work involving Finite Element Analysis, and subsequently learned of Prof K. J. Bathe's contributions to the [Finite Element Method](#) as well as his association with UCT. "

PhD at the University of Oxford

Leago Sebesho, a 2020 Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership alumna, was awarded a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship in 2024 to do her MSC in Applied Digital Health at the University of Oxford. She completed it in September 2025 and is now registered for her DPhil (PhD) in Clinical Medicine. "It is a moment that fills me with deep gratitude and reflection. It has taken a great deal of audacity, faith, and perseverance to reach this point," said Leago.



words still echo in moments when doubt or imposter syndrome tries to creep in.

I am looking forward to learning, growing, and contributing to research that pushes boundaries and makes a meaningful difference.

"Congratulations Leago! Beginning your doctorate at Oxford University is a testament to your hard work and dedication.," said Prof Bathe. "We are incredibly proud of you and look forward to following your journey. Wishing you every success as you embark on this exciting new adventure."

Achievements like this always remind me of my late grandmother. Amongst many roles, she worked as a tea lady for the army. She instilled in me a deep sense of discipline and purpose. It is no wonder I

am a morning person who cannot start the day without a cup of tea. During medical school, I would call her after every set of results, and she would always say, "Mara Leago, there is nothing you cannot do ngwanaka." Her

Excellence goes beyond the classroom

Owami Ngomane, a 2025 Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership Scholar, is a third-year Civil Engineering student at UCT.

Recently, Owami was recognised at the Upper Campus Residence (UCR) Excellence Dinner, where he received an award for achieving an impressive average of 80%. He was also honoured with the Timothy Nicholson Memorial Award, presented to the senior student with the highest GPA in residence for the 2024 academic year.

Beyond his academic achievements, Owami is deeply committed to service and leadership. He mentors first-year Civil Engineering students, volunteers as a tutor at UCR, serves as Deputy Coordinator of SFDA, and is Vice-Chairperson of SDASM UCT. His outstanding performance has earned him a place on the Dean's Merit List in the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment, as well as membership in the Golden Key International Honour Society.

"My excellence goes beyond the classroom," says Owami. "My leadership ethos is built on serving others and making a difference in my community."



Meet the 2026 Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership Scholars

After a highly competitive selection process, 14 exceptional students were awarded the 2026 Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership Scholarship in recognition of their outstanding academic performance and proven leadership potential. In 2026, a total of 19 Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership Scholars will be studying at UCT, representing all six faculties. Overall, there are 74 alumni, and two scholars who will be graduating in March 2026.

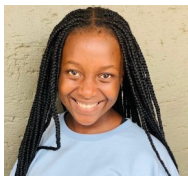
The scholarship aims to develop graduates who embody excellence, integrity, and a strong commitment to social justice — individuals prepared to make meaningful contributions in business, government, industry, and civil society across South Africa. Professor Klaus-Jürgen Bathe envisions a vibrant community of young leaders dedicated to improving the lives of others and shaping a better future for the country.



Ayabulela Yokwe is a MBChB student. Long-term, she hopes to work with global organisations like Doctors Without Borders and Rotary International. Her goal is not only to treat illness, but to tackle its systemic roots - from housing to nutrition to opportunity.



Brydwell Ngcobo is a law and psychology student in the Humanities Faculty. He wants to bring justice and reliance on the law for the vast majority in society, whose belief in it has waned in recent years.



Eneene-Hakhakhi Rambuda is an Audiology student. She is committed to using her skills and passion to uplift others and contribute to a more inclusive, empowered South Africa.



Faith Ngoma is a BA Law student, majoring in Law and Sociology. She aims to help build a South Africa where fairness is realised and justice is truly accessible.



Justine Kaba is a BA Theatre and Performance student. Her long-term plan is to establish a production company that primarily focuses on uplifting and sharing the stories of African people.

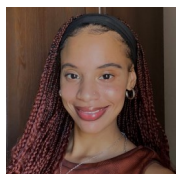


Karabo Maramegane is a Humanities student majoring in Psychology and Sociology. He wants to create safe spaces for people struggling with their mental health to speak out and know they will not be judged but listened to and guided towards healing.

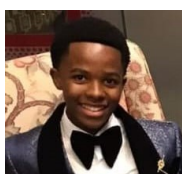
Meet the 2026 Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership Scholars



Nandi Nhlapo is a Bachelor of Business Science student, specialising in Statistics and Data Science. She aims to become a data scientist who uses information not only to drive business innovation, but to inform policy that improves lives—especially in underserved communities.



Quinlon Primo is a Humanities student majoring in law and sociology. She aims to become a candidate attorney at a law firm specialising in human rights protection.



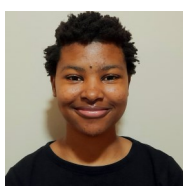
Sibongakonke Mthembu is a Bachelor of Business Science student majoring in Finance. In the future, he wants to invest in education and solutions to address unemployment.



Sinalo Nyamba is a BCom Accounting student. She aims to contribute to building a better South Africa by empowering others to make informed financial decisions, thereby living with greater stability and dignity.



Talin Naidoo is a Mechatronics student. Through collaboration, mentorship, and continuous learning, she hopes to play a meaningful role in building a safer, smarter South Africa.



Thato Sipoyo is an English, Media & Writing Humanities student. She aims to gain more knowledge in various aspects of writing that will enable her to become a better writer and leader of the future.



Tshegofatso Pooe is a Speech-Language Pathology student. Her dream is to make speech therapy equally accessible to all, regardless of their socioeconomic status.



Tyler Swanepoel is majoring in Chemistry, Human Anatomy and Physiology in the Science Faculty. She realises that her commitment to bettering society can be through the research and laboratory side of medicine.

Turning waste into valuable building products



Karabo Makole, Professor Dyllon Randall
and Dr Emma Horn

Karabo Makole, a 2020 Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership Scholar, was awarded his MSc in Civil Engineering with distinction from the University of Cape

Town in September 2025. He was especially delighted to share the moment with his co-supervisor, Emma Horn, who received her PhD at the same graduation ceremony.

Reflecting on the journey, Karabo said, *"I am immensely grateful to our supervisor, Professor Dyllon Randall, for imparting the wisdom to turn 'wastes' into valuable building products."*

Emma Horn's doctoral research focused on developing production methods for Bio-tiles — innovative, energy-efficient building materials made from waste streams. Karabo's master's research built on this by developing Geo-tiles,

which integrate geotextiles (a type of permeable fabric) as a structural component or substrate in the bio-tile production process.

He added, *"None of this would have been possible without the mentorship of Professor Mark Zuidgeest, the unwavering support of my wife, Leungo Makole, and, of course, my mother, Pelo Makole, who has believed in me from the very beginning."*

Karabo is now applying his expertise as a Graduate Structural Engineer at Bergstan, a leading consulting and development engineering firm based in Gaborone, Botswana.

March 2026 graduation



Mia van der Lingen will be graduating with a BA in English Literature and Anthropology. She is hoping to register for an Honours in English Literature in 2026.



Mikaeel Taliep will graduate with a BCom in Financial Accounting CA stream. He has applied to do the Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting in 2026 in order to become a Chartered Accountant.

Reminder of the KJB Alumni Scholarship appeal

We invite you to join us in creating the **KJB Alumni Scholarship** to support Professor Bathe's shared vision of a better South Africa for all. This is our chance to build on the incredible foundation he has laid and ensure that his legacy of nurturing talent continues for generations to come.

Every contribution, no matter how small, makes a difference. If we each aim for around 5k and encourage our friends and perhaps companies to donate, we can collectively build upon the strong foundation he has laid.

How You Can Donate

Visit [UCT Ways to Give](#), where you will find several convenient ways to make your donation to the KJB Alumni Scholarship fund. Please include an abbreviated donor name and '**KJB Fund**' in the bank reference field to assist with the prompt identification and processing of donations.

Together, we can make a profound difference and ensure that the spirit of giving back continues to thrive.

We invite you to join the [Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership LinkedIn page](#) and help us grow a vibrant, connected community of current scholars, alumni, and supporters.

Naledi Masilo: Jazz, Justice and the Power of a Dream

From Alberton to Boston, from UCT lecture halls to Madison Square Garden, Naledi Masilo's life has been a symphony of courage, curiosity, and purpose. A South African vocalist, educator, storyteller, and activist, she has made it her mission to weave music, social justice, and women's empowerment into every note she sings.

Naledi's path was not a straight line. Initially set on a career in international law, she came to UCT in 2015 to study International Relations and Sociology. Immersed in campus life — from the SRC Transformation Subcommittee to the United Nations Association of South Africa — she also began rediscovering her passion for music. Encouraged by friends at UCT's College of Music, she entered Cape Town's Open Mic Jazz competition and placed in the finals, sparking a shift in her life's tempo.

Her years at UCT taught her more than academics. "One thing my mother instilled in me is to invest in the community you're in," Naledi says. She led initiatives to make residence events accessible to all, helped create policy parity between women's and men's residences, and earned a Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership Scholarship — support that allowed her to fully participate in campus and community life.

Determined to pursue music seriously,



Naledi applied to American conservatories, eventually choosing the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where she became the only African student on campus. She turned that reality into a platform, leading the Black Students Union, co-founding the school's Center for Equity and Belonging, and initiating frank conversations about race, representation, and belonging.

As an educator, Naledi has taught more than 20,000 American schoolchildren about South African jazz and history through Carnegie Hall's *Musical Explorers* programme. "You can't talk about South African jazz without talking about South African politics," she notes. "It's protest music — a living history."

Her activism also takes shape through the **Dreaming Girls Arts Foundation**, which she founded in 2019 to connect young women in the arts with leadership skills, policy engagement, and one another. The foundation has hosted conferences, mentorship programmes, and cross-continental exchanges, giving young women tools — and the confidence — to make change in their own communities.

Naledi's artistry continues to reach new stages. In 2023 she toured North America with Hans Zimmer, performing in legendary venues like Madison Square Garden, a dream she first pinned to her bedroom wall at age 13. She released her debut EP, *Batu*, and is preparing a new release this year.

Her guiding compass? What she calls her "big three": women, music, and development. "Everything I do will be rooted in these," she says. "Ultimately, I want to open an arts leadership school for girls in South Africa."

For Naledi Masilo, music is more than performance — it is a catalyst for justice, belonging, and hope. And from Cape Town to New York, her song is only just beginning.

Naledi is a 2016 Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership alumna

Story by Katherine Wilson
Alumni News