

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO ACADEMIC TRIUMPH



Professor Sheryl Hendriks congratulates Mjabu Ngidi on attaining his Masters Degree in Food Security.

Nine years ago Mr Mjabu Ngidi was a domestic worker at an Empangeni guest house - today he is reading for his Doctorate in Food Security at UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus.

Raised in a rural area in Hluhluwe on the KwaZulu-Natal North Coast, Mr Mjabu is one of eight students who recently graduated with a Masters Degree from the African Centre for Food Security – the only Centre in the world to offer postgraduate qualifications in that discipline.

Mr Mjabu attributes his academic success to three women:

- His mother Mrs Balinganisile Ngidi, who although without formal education, was supportive and allowed

him to continue studying.

- His former employee, Ms Amanda Breedt, who recognised his potential and encouraged him to apply at UKZN.
- His supervisor, Professor Sheryl Hendriks, who provided him with the motivation and assistance to persevere with his studies.

Mr Mjabu started his academic career in 2000 as a student in the Science Foundation Programme (SFP) on the Pietermaritzburg campus. University was not an easy transition for him with language proving to be a major stumbling block.

He was also unable to realise his dream of studying medicine because he lacked the necessary university entry requirements. Money was scarce and he had to find ways of providing his family with financial support.

Mr Mjabu completed a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in Biochemistry and Microbiology. He then did his Postgraduate Diploma in Food Security followed by a Masters Degree in which he focused on the impact of crop production on household food security.