Doctorate for Indira

INDIRA GILBERT attained a doctorate in social work at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, while battling with breast cancer. She was diagnosed in 2011. Despite being shattered by the news, she continued to persevere and graduated with a PhD (doctorate) last Monday.

Cancer treatment has many adverse effects and for Gilbert it was no different. It affected her concentration and memory but she overcame the odds.

Gilbert said she drew strength from God and her loved ones.

“My husband supported and encouraged me, especially when I felt demotivated or had low energy, and my parents spurred me on to pursue my dreams. I am also grateful to my brother, who steered me onto the right academic path,” she said.

Her research supervisor, Professor Vishanthi Sevapaul, was a pillar of support.

Gilbert is in remission but is on chronic medication. Her research project primarily focused on women, during and after abortion.

It dealt with their circumstances, decision-making and experience during the ordeal, and the support systems available to them. The project was based on a personal tragedy. Gilbert lost her twin boys 20 weeks into her pregnancy, when she was 30 years old, due to medical complications.

“My experience led me to question why women abort and what emotions they experience during the decision-making process, the abortion itself and the period following it.”

Her research on abortion focused on the South African context and was based in KwaZulu-Natal.

Gilbert lives in Marionhill and is an educator at Bamorosa Secondary School. She said she was taking a break from academia for now.

Six Cum Laude for DUT team

COLLABORATIVE learning was taken to new heights as a group of six studied together and excelled with flying colours ... each obtained a cum laude pass.

The six — Akeel Hanif, 28, Kisdandra Govender, 26, Sachin Kistasamy, 27, Ashnika Singh, 26, Tevan Govender, 24, and Zeesha Ramathan, 24 — obtained their Bachelor of Technology (B(Tech) degree in Civil Engineering from the Durban University of Technology (DUT) at the graduation ceremony at the Steve Biko campus on Friday.

“Studying collaboratively over the years has borne fruit in a scarce, skilled and challenging environment. As a group we have brought new meaning to university study and collaborative learning.”

SIX OF THE BEST: Akeel Hanif, left, Kisdandra Govender, Sachin Kistasamy, Ashnika Singh, Tevan Govender and Zeesha Ramathan ... they studied in a group and all passed with cum laude.

Avocado research

FEEDING the nation.

That was the mindset behind Alakia Kasim’s research on preserving avocados.

The agricultural engineering student’s research focused on the ineffective post harvest handling techniques of preserving, packaging and suitable storage conditions on the physical, chemical and subjective sensory quality of avocado fruit.

Kasim, 26, from Pietermaritzburg, who passed cum laude at UKZN, said: “As agricultural engineers we are duty bound to ensure quality, productivity and sustainability in food production.”

Motivated by her passion to succeed, Kasim said even though the degree was demanding and challenging, it was also enjoyable and rewarding.

The two types of storage conditions that were analysed included fixed temperature and relative humidity and that of varying temperature and relative humidity (simulation of the avocado cool chain).

The research was aimed at preserving horticultural commodities which means in this case giving avocados a longer shelf life.

Kasim said her role model was her mother, whom she described as a strong and determined woman.

“Her future plans include developing into her passion for research and further contributing to the science fraternity.”

“Now I hope to pursue a doctoral degree and upon successful completion, I aim to lecture at a tertiary institution as well as focus on additional research and consulting.”

“The opportunity of being at a tertiary institution will certainly enable me to undertake academic research in addressing problems relating to the community,” said Kasim.

Three scoop 12 Medical School awards

THREE medical students have scooped 12 honours at the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine, UKZN.

Dr Christopher Pierre Andre Naidu, Dr Dane Perulal and Dr Nisholoni Naicker graduated cum laude.

The trio, who were honoured at an oath taking and awards ceremony hosted by the College of Health Sciences last week, received 12 awards between them.

Perulal scooped six awards: Top Student in the School of Clinical Medicine, the YK Seedat Prize, Academy of Family Practice for Best Student in Family Medicine, the Randles Road Medical Centre Prize in Family Medicine for the highest mark in family medicine; the Sammy Sacks Prize in Obstetrics and Gynaecology for the highest mark in the final examination; and the Department of Paediatrics Prize for the Best Overall Student in Years Three, Four and Five.

Naidu was awarded the Top Student in the School of Clinical Medicine, the YK Seedat Prize; the Servier Prize in Family Medicine for second highest mark in family medicine; the KM Seedat Prize in Medicine for the second highest mark in the final examination in medicine; and the Department of Paediatrics Prize for Best Final Year Student in Paediatrics.

Naidu was excited about his achievement. “I am so grateful to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Without him nothing would have been possible.” He will serve his internship at Gandhi Hospital in Phoenix and is considering specialising in plastic surgery.

Naidoo received awards for his achievements.

Hydro whizz

DEVAN Reddy’s hard work has paid off.

The 24-year-old of Ladysmith last attained a masters degree in civil engineering from the University of KwaZulu-Natal last week. His dissertation investigated regions in South Africa where water from rivers and streams is converted to electrical power for domestic use. This topic was inspired by how renewable energy can be used with traditional energy to provide power for the country.

Reddy, pictured, found many South African communities living alongside rivers in which small-scale hydro-power stations could supply and offset power demands. He is currently working at Eskom as a site engineer.

Reddy now plans to gain design exposure and become integrated with the International civil engineering community.

THE University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban University of Technology are holding their graduation ceremonies. Reporters JOLENE MARRIAH and KEISHA SINGH highlighted some of the top achievers.

Solar car pioneer

A SOLAR car project could redefine the very definition of how automobiles are run.

This was the project of Fathima Moosa, 22, who graduated last week with a summum cum laude degree in mechanical engineering. Moosa worked on the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Solar Car Project 2013.

“This was a defining moment in her degree.”

She was involved in the structural analysis of the project — determining the most efficient way to construct the solar vehicle, which would work during the day.

“The solar car is UKZN’s mechanical engineering final year undergraduate project. It represents an innovative and efficient design promoting green energy for the future, that is rich in local skill and creativity.”

“Unlike many of the final year mechanical engineering projects, ours was concerned only with design, not construction. The experience was both interesting and challenging. I learnt a lot but also lost a lot on much-needed sleep.”

Her love for mathematics and science and her natural curiosity about how things worked led her to study mechanical engineering.

“Another reason for my interest in engineering is perhaps my somewhat idealistic notion that I can help make the world a better place to live in through the use of alternate energy sources like solar power.”

She intends to register part-time for a Master’s degree.

Best in UKZN

RIDWAAN Amad, pictured, has emerged top at his university.

In addition to completing his electronic engineering degree summum cum laude, Amad received the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Lawrence and Constance Robin-son Scholarship, awarded to the best undergraduate student, and the TowNSley Williams Scholarship, given to the best student entering the final year of study.

Amad’s results throughout his undergraduate years have averaged above 90 percent.

He also attained certificates of merit for 43 modules he took in the first three years of study; was top of the class for 36 of these modules, scoring 100 percent in two modules; and was awarded the Dean’s Commendation in every semester since he registered.

UKZN’s Deputy vice-chancellor of Teaching and Learning, Professor Renuka Pillay, said: “This is a phenomenal and rare achievement that makes him one of the very best students at UKZN.”

Amad said he was fascinated at how fast technology evolved in 2011 and how it could be used to make a positive difference in people’s lives. His success to success setting, a balanced lifestyle and the confidence to achieve excellence.

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