

INSPIRATIONAL
students

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*It took me quite a long time
to develop a voice,
and now that I have it,
I am not going to be silent*

– Madeleine Albright



wela – growing women in the engineering field

This booklet showcases our third cohort of wela girls and I am proud and honoured to present Amber, Chane, Corlia, Fulufhedzani, Gcinashe, Kholofelo, Matamela, Lerato, Murendeni, **Nadia**, Siphesihle, Siphokazi, Dzunisani, Mamela, Nosihle, Palesa, Refilwe and Zinhle.

I may say this often but I am completely blown away by how much wela has grown over the last few years. The number of participants in this booklet is evident of that. It continues to grow from strength to strength and we have the women engineering students and their passion and commitment to thank for that.

As I am sure you are all aware of by now, we can proudly announce that our wela Leadership Development programme (LDP) is in full swing. Women engineering students participating in the LDP will receive a short course certificate on completion highlighting the workshops and other activities attended. These workshops and activities are aimed at advancing the students emotionally, personally as well as academically through the student counseling workshops as well as the Lean Manufacturing and Project Management short courses.

The wela research study is also about to enter its second year. Through this research we aim to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in various engineering related fields.

We would like to thank all the “wela girls” for their enthusiasm and kind words and we trust that they will inspire you to become a leader and choose Engineering as a career.

Now turn the page and begin reading the inspirational pieces and take away any advice that you feel would benefit you.

Dr Ann Lourens

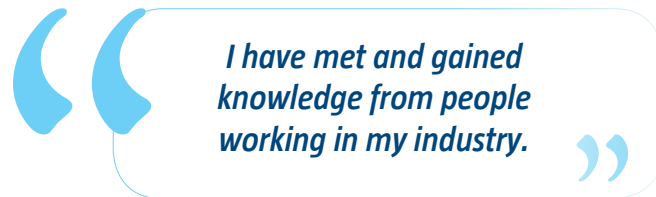
HOD: Industrial Engineering, Project leader: wela



Amber Collins
Industrial Engineering Student

I am from Pretoria, moving here to Port Elizabeth to study was a big change for me, but being able to stay with my sister has definitely helped me adjust and cope with everything. I wasn't always certain on what I wanted to study but I know now that this is what I am supposed to do and this is my calling - just like it was for my father. Even though I applied to do a degree in Industrial Engineering at Tuks

and Stellenbosch and did not get in, I believe everything happens for a reason and that God wanted me to be here and study at NMMU. I would never have met the people I have, become part a support group like wela and a fresh start. I love studying at NMMU, I love studying Industrial Engineering and even though it was a tough and bumpy road to get here and there is an even bigger road in front of me. I am grateful for the lessons learnt and I couldn't be happier about where I am now and be more passionate about what I'm studying.



I have gained a lot of things from wela such as friends. I have made friends with girls from other engineering courses and that is an awesome thing for me being new to Port Elizabeth. I have met and gained knowledge from people working in my industry, having knowledge like that is a powerful tool and has made me enjoy what I do even more so.

My highlights of wela this year would be the global engineering panel discussion, a lot of the speeches were from Industrial Engineers and hence it was nice to relate to and get an insight into the working world. I also really enjoyed the netiquette and etiquette workshop and the 7 Choices of Successful Women workshop.

Personally I would say that I benefited from finding things out about myself that I have never known before such as what colour person I am, or how I deal with conflict, my personality traits and what colours and clothing I should wear.



Chanevan Rensburg
Industrial Engineering Student

I am 19 years old and currently in my first year studying Industrial Engineering. I've chosen a career in Industrial Engineering because I like to see that the flow of processes is smooth and effective. I love cooking and doing outdoor activities with friends and family.

A benefit of wela is having a room to use for studying and relaxation between classes. The workshops

that wela offers helps you to deal with the challenges you will have to face in the industry which is a great benefit as I'm about to enter a male dominated career. wela has also taught me that professionalism in the workplace is of high importance.

The highlight of wela during this year was meeting new people from other engineering courses. The workshop on how to dress appropriately in the work place and other occasions was also a highlight for me.

Through wela I have gained leadership skills and it has also taught me to interact with people I don't know that well, which was a difficult task for me. I am a person who likes doing things on my own, but wela has helped me to accept assistance from others and being able to work in groups.

I would definitely recommend that **prospective engineering** students do a course in Engineering at NMMU.

Corlia Rens
Civil Engineering Student

I am an ordinary farm girl trying to make it in the real world. Luckily I have the rest of the wela girls for support. I am a hard worker and I want to make a change in this male dominant profession. I want to be successful in my career so that I can have a comfortable life and travel the world. One day I would like to live on a wine farm, preferably near Cape Town, with a family of my own.



Wela is an organisation that offers support to women in engineering. There are various workshops that one can attend that will help you in your career one day. They also offer support groups that you can talk to whenever you have a problem. The wela ladies are like sisters, they give you a sense of belonging.

It is really nice just to say what is on your mind as well as to listen to the rest of the wela girls and we had so much fun during the coffee meetings.

The technical project has been a major highlight for me. You meet new people and you make friends with the girls in the group.

Wela has taught me never to stand down to the men in engineering, because women are just as creative and we can make a change. I have gained tips on how to improve my leadership skills and various other aspects that are important in my profession.

*...wela is an organisation
that offers support to women
in engineering...*

Fulufhedzani Netshifhefhe

Civil Engineering Student



My name is Fulufhedzani Netshifhefhe and I was born and raised in Limpopo (Phiphidi). I am a down to earth Venda girl who has a lot of love and respect for everyone. I am currently studying towards my National Diploma in Civil Engineering and have so much passion for it. I also have a passion for art and this is one of my hobbies.

At first I underestimated the wela programme, but after joining it I started to realise it is a wonderful programme that is benefiting me mentally, psychologically, emotionally and educationally. Wela has helped me to be more social and learn how to interact with other people. The whole experience has been a lot of fun and I wish every other girl in engineering was part of the programme.

There are so many highlights I really enjoyed this year. I would say I enjoyed all of the workshops we have had which have taught me

how to write my own CV, create a portfolio, have my own mission statement, improve academically and how to behave and dress as a women in the business world.

Gcinashe Lithlethu Mphahlele

Civil Engineering Student

My name is Gcinashe Lithlethu Mphahlele, but my friends call me "Nash". I was born on January 6th, 1993 here in Port Elizabeth and I am currently an S3 Civil Engineering student here at NMMU. In high school I enjoyed Maths and Science and this had a great influence on my decision to study engineering. In my spare time I enjoy reading and I also love cooking and baking.

Wela creates an environment where women can come together and freely share and empower each other.

The highlight of my year with wela has been the connections I have



*...I have become more
confident in myself...*

made. I would never have had the opportunity to meet most of the women in the group if it hadn't been for this initiative.

I have become more confident in myself and as a female engineer in a male-dominated workplace.

I know how to dress and communicate appropriately. I have a head start on what to expect in my career and how to deal with challenges. It is now more clear to me where I am going and what to expect in future. Lastly, I can define who I am and where I am going without hesitation.

The highlight of my wela experience would have to be the 7 Choices of Successful Women workshop. It was there that I learnt that the choices that we make define the kind of people that we are and where we are going in life.

I have gained a lot of self-confidence and I believe that I can achieve anything I put my mind to. I also learnt that things such as your past and where you come from do not define you as a person because you are not a product of your conditions; you are a product of your decisions.

Kholofelo Letsie

Industrial Engineering Student

I am career driven and would like to be a motivation to other young girls out there, that our future is not determined by our background and failures. Success is possible and through commitment everyone can achieve it. I like smiling, listening to music and helping people. I am really interested in languages and I am hoping to take a few short language courses.

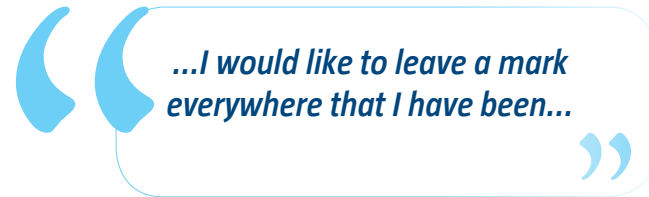


I had an opportunity to network with other students in this male dominated field, thereby forming a long life friendship. I was very excited to make time to have fun at motivational gatherings, it made me feel at home.

Every workshop attended has left a permanent mark in my life. Sometimes I tend to accept things as they are although now, through the personal wellness development workshop, I have learnt the importance of maintaining balance among various parts of my life

without losing focus. At the 7 Choices of a Successful Women workshop I have learnt that I should take responsibility and be the best that I can be in any work that I do. I would like to leave a mark everywhere that I have been. Through all these workshops I am able to draft a rich life vision that inspires and motivates me, turning my life visions into realistic goals.

I have developed a positive attitude towards my field of study and the decisions that I make. My sense of responsibility and ownership over my life has increased. I have realised that it is vital to get in touch with my emotional side and redefine the way I view things. The more I practice, the more it becomes natural to me. With no doubt, I am fully equipped to face any challenge I come across.



Matamela Comfort Livhoyi

Civil Engineering Student



My name is Matamela Comfort Livhoyi, I am from Limpopo and I am currently staying in Melodi Annex Residence, NMMU South Campus, Port Elizabeth. I am 19 years of age and I am a proud wela girl. I am driven by things that challenge me and I have found my course to be one of the things that are really challenging. Which is why I want to pursue it and show myself and those around me that I can do it because I put my heart and mind to it.

From wela I learnt that as a women there are challenges that our granny's and great grandmothers together with our mothers faced in the past. These included being undermined, looked down upon and told that they can't do things that are traditionally male activities.

However, together as wela ladies we motivate each other to know that there is no such thing as a man's job. I have learnt how to conduct myself as a lady in the workplace as well as recognising the person within me and what type of person I can become. I have also learnt not to undermine myself and to stand out and take a step towards being independent.

The highlight of my wela experience has to be deleting the fear in me and recognising that I to can be a leader. Wela helped me realise that I have to believe in myself and show others that I believe in myself and to stop being insecure. It has also helped to act on the positive aspects that I have and to not dwell on the negative.

I have gained self-esteem and also depth in who I am and what I want. I have learnt knew things like knowing that colours can describe who I am and the moods that I can have. I have learnt that to change my perspective of something and attitude can change the way I achieve things in life. I also learnt that if I don't achieve in my studies for example I can go to student counseling and they will help me revise my study method or whatever the problem could be.

Yes, I would recommend engineering as a possible career, because to me we are all the same, female or male, and it's just the way we were created. We can all do it and its possible to achieve a diploma or degree in Engineering.

I would advise young women to have an open mind when studying engineering and to put their focus on it and give their all. Whenever they feel like they are about to fall they must know that there is always someone who is willing to help them get up again. Use the services provided to you like student counseling and mentors. I would also advise women engineering students to join WELA because it will help in growing future women engineering leaders.



Lerato Matsoai
Civil Engineering Student

I am currently doing my S3 in Civil Engineering. I enjoy reading novels and listening to hip hop, pop and jazz. I like keeping to myself but I'm not shy.

I have made friends from other fields of engineering and they are my support system. Several workshops aimed at improving my personality have greatly

benefited me academically and emotionally.

The highlight of my experience was definitely the 7 Choices for Successful Women workshop. It was informative and very interactive.

WELA has helped improve my self-esteem as now I can voice my opinions without feeling judged. I have also grown as an individual following the True Colours workshop because I now understand myself in terms of my strengths and weaknesses and I can try and work on them.

Yes, if they are passionate about them.

The more effort they put into their studies, the better the results. Getting help is a sign of strength while not asking for help is a sign of weakness that holds no benefit.

...WELA has helped improve my self-esteem as I can now voice my opinions...

Murendeni Munyai
Industrial Engineering Student



I am a good student who always smiles all the time. I like reading magazines, novels and watching TV. I believe that if you really want to achieve something you have to fight for it no matter how difficult it is.

I am quite a shy person so WELA has taught me how to socialise with other people and participate in various activities.

A highlight for me has been getting to know each other and having mentors who you can approach for help and guidance.

Nadia van Schalkwyk
Civil Engineering Student

I am a first year Civil Engineering student and a first year WELA member. I enjoy spending time with friends, but am also hardworking when things need to be done!

The benefits are developing yourself and other skills and also being able to help other people. An example of this is with the technical project team helping wheelchair bound students.

The highlight of my year has been taking part in all the different workshops and making friends with the students from the different engineering professions. I was also part of the group who built a table for wheelchair bound students and it was a great experience.

I have learnt new skills through the portfolio development workshop and I have acquired various leadership skills.



Siphesihle Kasibe

Electrical Engineering Student



I come all the way from Kwanobuhle in Uitenhage and I am currently studying towards a diploma in Electrical Engineering. I am a people's person and I am kind, ambitious, an idealist and I care. I believe in integrity and respect for myself and for others. I believe your happiness is what completes you and someone's life is not bought because it is priceless.

Wela equips you to be a skilled women for the future and it motivates you to become a woman who has a back bone. The programme gives you courage to voice your opinions with confidence and gives you a sense of belonging in a man's world.

My highlight was the 7 choices of Successful Women workshop. The quote that "the secret to happiness and fulfillment is to never leave a

...I feel more equipped for the future because of wela...

person or place having taken more than you have been given, means that in order to be happy you need to make someone happy. The portfolio development workshops have equipped me with the necessary skills on how to design my portfolio which will become very handy in the future. Wela has really done a lot for me.

I have become a well rounded person and I have gained numerous friends from the other engineering disciplines. I have learnt how to compile my portfolio and I feel more equipped for the future because of wela. They have balanced the educational side with the social side of tertiary education.

To the future engineering students I would say engineering is a challenging course which is why it is enjoyable. The saying that this is a man's world is not true because they need us. Please don't forget to balance your life because as person you need be socially and academically involved.

Siphokazi Jacobs

Industrial Engineering Student



I am an enthusiastic aspiring Industrial Engineer and as a person I am self-motivated, hardworking and goal orientated.

Based on the comprehensive extra-curricular activities I have taken part in, mainly through wela, I have benefitted in ways unimaginable. I have learnt the art of communication without discrimination. I have learnt people skills through the interaction with other wela girls

whilst bouncing around ideas through the many activities we had to do. Not only have I acquired new skills, namely leadership skills, but I have strengthened the ones I already had.

The highlight of my wela experience would be the panel discussion. From the session I learnt a lot about the working world as well as about my own personal aspirations. I gathered not only that

everything I deemed unattainable is actually just within reach but only if I'm willing to work for it. I also learnt from the speakers that it's not always about studying and going overseas but more about studying and building our own country because, at the end of the day there's no place like home.

I have gained knowledge about myself. Through the student counseling workshops I learnt that I needed to take care of myself as an individual before I can actually really look forward. As woman we tend to be extremely nonchalant about our own troubles and we worry more about other people and their troubles. But through those workshops I have truly learnt that one needs to take care of themselves personally before they can take care of others or even reach their fullest potential at any work environment.

...everything I deemed unattainable is within reach, but only if I am willing to work for it...

Dzunisani Dorinda Valoyi

Industrial Engineering Student

I am an easy going person who just wants peace. I chose Industrial Engineering as its more hands on career and I like problem solving and working with people.

The benefits for me were:

- ▶ Learning to make reasonable choices
- ▶ Personal grooming
- ▶ Learning how to dress right and always look presentable
- ▶ Friendships with other wela girls(as we spend more time together and similar personalities are realized)
- ▶ International study opportunities
- ▶ Self-esteem boost



- ▶ Personal and professional life-skills
- ▶ Self-discovery
- ▶ Discover strengths and weaknesses that I never thought I had
- ▶ Conflict management
- ▶ Assertiveness
- ▶ Self-defense in a male dominated industry (engineering)

The 7 Choices for Successful Women workshop was my favorite session. I am more of a hands on person and I enjoyed being creative, during the workshop. We were asked to individually create a dream page which resembled our hopes and dreams for the future (after university) and also for during our final years. I loved how I could just sit and design something rather than listen to the facilitator talk throughout the session. We also watched videos of people who used small efforts to help but resulted in remarkable changes in the lives of the people affected. My 30 day diary was also something that I found interesting as it taught me more about myself. The way the facilitator presented the workshop was fun, interesting and exciting and I didn't even feel the hours pass by.

Through wela I have learnt how to deal with certain aspects of my life that I had issues with.

Mamela Jikwana

Civil Engineering Student



I am a goal oriented young lady who is trying to make a difference in her family of six and I am the oldest. Being the persistent person that I am, I did not let failing a module in my first year bring me down. I still strive for more knowledge and a successful future.

I am semi-shy (I doubt that word even exists) and wela has taught me to voice my opinion. We worked in different groups and that took me out of my comfort zone. I have also joined societies and I am a part of the SAICE 2014 committee, all thanks to wela.

The true colors workshop which was held on the 26th of April 2013 showed me who I really am.

Engineering is not a walk in the park, but if I can do it and other women in the industry can do it then so can you.

I am more outspoken now, I engage myself in different events and I make sure to meet and talk to people I do not know at these events.

Engineering is not a walk in the park, but if I can do it and other women in the industry can do it then so can you. Dreams are worth fighting for, don't give up because 'so and so' said that engineering is hard or because you are a girl and you are not going to make it. Don't give up, hard work pays off. There will always be light at the end of the tunnel and even if you don't get there in record time you will get there eventually.

Nosihle Hlomendlini

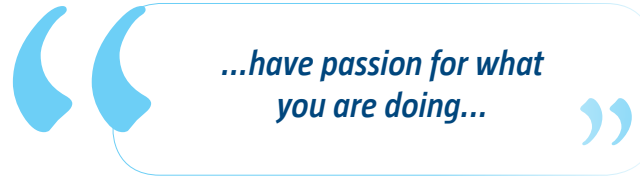
Civil Engineering Student



I am currently studying Civil Engineering. I enjoy long walks on the beach to reflect and relax. One would describe me as approachable and I strive to make things work no matter how disastrous the situation may be. I love reading books on history and bibliographies of people who managed to keep their heads held high despite their painful situations eg the apartheid era.

I gained new sisters and Wela has opened a new platform for me to truly understand people and future circumstances I might face in the workplace. Wela has helped me become open minded and I've been introduced to successful women in the engineering industry. Through Wela I have developed emotionally and academically.

The panel discussions were truly inspiring as it was invigorating to see



women who are making a difference in their fields. They put my nerves at ease and kept me motivated to keep pushing on even during the dark rainy days.

As mentioned before, self-growth has been **on** of my highlights, I've learned to be comfortable with who I am, and I deeply thank Wela for such assistance. My interpersonal skills have developed tremendously and I've realised through Wela that one needs to learn to balance all aspects of one's life.

Yes, if one is destined and fits the criteria, academically wise, to enter a course in engineering I would definitely recommend it. Wela would also offer support for women engineering students and I have witnessed that even females can be a story of success in the engineering field.

Time management is very vital, find time to fit in as much as possible in one day. Have passion for what you are doing and fully dedicate yourself to whatever you do. Lastly smile, because it only takes a smile to make a dark day seem bright.

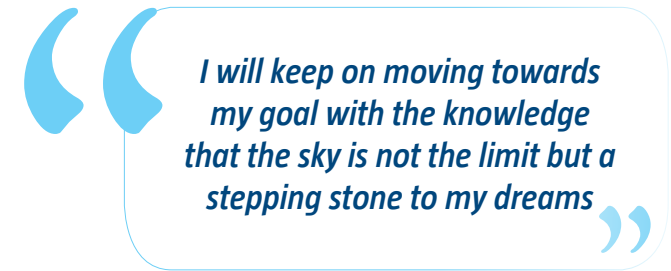
Palesa Sylvia Musa

Industrial Engineering Student

I am Palesa Sylvia Musa and I am an Industrial Engineering student. I am an inspiration to many just by being who I am and I would like to be a role model to others one day. Honesty is one of my most important values and I have great respect for the environment. I am a young intellectual and I enjoy spending time reflecting to myself and listening to my inner being. I also enjoy being with friends and family as they help me grow mentally and emotionally as a person.



Through my experience with Wela, I have acquired ways of expressing myself in a polite manner. It was also one of the greatest benefits to have the opportunity to get to know the other ladies in the engineering



faculty. Therefore I believe I have gained friendship and most of all the ability to understand and accept different personalities and characters.

There are quite a few highlights of my Wela experience this year. I am very happy to say that the 7 Choices of Successful Women was the best.

I have personally learnt that I am in charge of my future. Hence, I will keep on moving towards my goal with the knowledge that the sky is not the limit but a stepping stone to my dreams.

Refilwe Selai

Mechanical Engineering Student

My name is Refilwe Selai and I am a bit reserved and can't say what's on my mind. I am always worried about what other people might say and hence do not react or say what is on my mind. With that being said though I do call myself somewhat adventurous.

I have learnt a lot at wela, in particular, how to use my strong points to my advantage, how to dress on a formal occasion, how to speak out and how to stand my ground.

The etiquette and netiquette workshop was one of my favourite workshops. It taught us the value of social media and how to behave appropriately in a formal setting.

I have fallen in love with my chosen faculty and it has given me a sense of belonging.

I would advise all women engineering students to join wela. It might seem like a lot of work, but it's not and it's worth it



Zinhle Mthembu

Civil Engineering Student

I am the second born of four children and the first of two girls and I enjoy the role of being a big sister. I love reading Christian fiction and writing poetry and I also enjoy working with my hands. At university I enjoy the practical more than the theory. I am a curious person there is always a why and a how lurking at the back of my mind. I also work better with structure and procedure rather than free-reign.

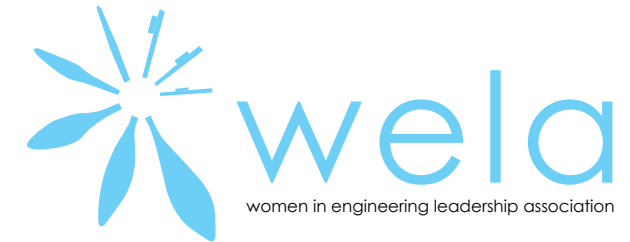


Wela is a hub of growth for all engineering students. Wela unites us all and assists us in gaining confidence within ourselves while also retaining our feminine side. Wela's approach also shuns off the possibility of being arrogant or egocentric but teaches teamwork and unity and also how to act in an engineering environment.

All the programs that are set for the students have been very informative and inspirational. Though wela I learnt to be a lady and an

engineer at the same time. I particularly enjoyed the panel discussion entitled global engineering. I learned a lot about the opportunities that are out there. The etiquette and netiquette workshop was also a highlight as it opened my eyes in regards with being careful about what we post on social networks as well as proper dinning manners for future events.

I gained my confidence back and made friends with a group of driven and motivated ladies in their own fields of engineering who are a part of the wela Technical project. Most of what I gained I cannot express in words, none seem fitting enough. I am grateful to the founders and organisers for everything related to wela. You have improved our lives. God bless you.



THE LOGO: A metamorphosis from mechanical to organic shapes. The mechanical shape symbolises engineering, while the organic flower-like shape represents femininity. The logo symbolises the evolution of younger women, moulded by their mentors to grow into successful engineers. It also represents the evolution of an idea from the initial concept stages to the actual realisation of an engineering project. The logo radiates the association's initiative to change the engineering sector and establish a support structure for women in engineering.

Wela is the Xhosa word for change/transition.

(logo design: Milla Theron, NMMU Graphic Design student)

Zandra Kolesky



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