

From Onamutai village to Sydney

Alumnus reflects on epic academic journey

Born and bred in a village, Mesias Alfeus, a PhD candidate in the field of Quantitative Finance at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) in Australia, says his first degree at UNAM laid a solid foundation for his future success. His research has appeared in highly ranked peer reviewed journals, and has been presented at multiple international forums of note such as Italy, Dublin and many more. He is an accomplished UNAM graduate with various distinctions and the winner of the Young Investigator Training Programme (YITP). UNAM Forum wanted to know just how he did it.

is sexy. I found that the following virtues helpful to remain on track (1) discipline, (2) a sense of dissatisfaction, and (3) determination.

UF: Tell us about your journey. How did it start?

I started my undergraduate studies in Mathematics and Physics at the University of Namibia (UNAM) in 2009. I had a lot of fun during my undergraduate years, but I also worked very hard and developed a real interest in my studies. I attribute my postgraduate success to the proper undergraduate training I went through at UNAM.

UF: What is the secret to your success?

I believe everything is possible if you have faith in God. Since I was in primary school at Okadila West in Onamutai village, my only goal was to build confident personalities in Mathematics, which has now evolved into discovering something new in Mathematics that will be useful for practitioners and have real social impact. To attain my goal I became single minded, and zealous. Because of this, most people thought I was going crazy when I used to say Maths

UF: Who were the people that inspired you?

I had the best mentorship from Professor Frednard Gideon and Dr. Martin M. Mugochi. The best UNAM moments I recall, were during graduations, when I was consecutively selected as the Best Science student, and during my final year in 2012, when my final year honours thesis' results got accepted at the International Conference III Jaen Conference on Approximation Theory for presentation in Spain. I also received sponsorship from the



Mr Mesias Alfeus

UNAM Foundation. This was indeed an overwhelming experience.

UF: Did you know what you were interested in from the onset?

Despite developing an interest in research at UNAM, I didn't really have a clear idea of what I wanted to do with a mathematics degree. Professor Frednard Gideon advised me to enroll for a joint postgraduate honours degree between Stellenbosch University and African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS), and the University of Cape Town (UCT). The honours programme was really

intense. I remembered we started off 8 students, but only two of us graduated (and with cum laude). The other guy did his undergraduate studies through the University of Witwatersrand. I received sponsorship from the Namibia Financial Institutions Supervisory Authority (NAMFISA) to continue with my Master's degree in Financial Mathematics, at Stellenbosch University.

UF: What were some of your toughest times?

The last half of 2015, I was without a job. For the entire 6 months, the only nod to 'real life' was my application for a PhD position.

UF: You are about to graduate with a PhD, tell us about your research interests?

My PhD research focuses on developing stochastic techniques for modeling new risk phenomena in the Financial Markets. In particular, I take into consideration the various risks that emanated from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). One of such risks is roll-over risk as reflected by the market basis spreads.

It is the type of research that I have always wanted to work on, i.e., the recognition of new risks and the challenging of old assumptions in finance. My PhD research is multi-disciplinary, covering interest rate theory, stochastic volatility modeling and computational finance - reflecting my desire to continually learn.

Social Security Commission initiate ties with UNAM

A multi-disciplinary memorandum of understanding was entered into by UNAM and the Social Security Commission (SSC), not so long ago.

The agreement hopes to execute groundbreaking projects that will uplift the socio-economic conditions of some of the poorest communities in Namibia.

Answering a question to the press, the SSC's Chief Executive Officer, Milka Mungunda explained that this agreement, partnering with an educational institution, is the first of its kind for the SSC and hopes to establish more in the future.



Professor Kenneth Matengu with Ms Milka Mungunda

"If you want to go fast go alone, but if you want to go far, go together", remarked UNAM Vice-Chancellor, Professor Kenneth Matengu, in support of the newfound partnership.

Further adding that, "UNAM will ensure that the people who can truly add value to this project are tasked with it".

Meet Dr Lydia Ndinealo Horn

Recently appointed at UNAM as a researcher in the Zero Emissions Research Initiative (ZERI), Dr Horn has also landed another prestigious appointment - High level Steering Committee for Human Resource Development and Nuclear Resource Management at the African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related Science and Technology.



Dr Lydia Horn

She boasts a PhD in Plant Breeding and is an experienced scientist with a proven track record in farming.