

# New scholarship for neurodiversity studies launched by UJ vice-chancellor

The University of Johannesburg (UJ) vice-chancellor and principal professor Letlhokwa Mpedi, together with his family, launched the Mpedi Family Neurodiversity Studies Scholarship.



Source: [Pexels](#)

This initiative signifies a commitment to fostering inclusive research and addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals with neurodiverse conditions.

The scholarship is worth R250,000. An additional R50,000 is set aside for the assessments of children at the Centre for Neurodiversity@UJ.

In pursuit of increasing the number of professionals in this field, Prof Mpedi and his family have established the Scholarship on Neurodiversity Studies to assist four students pursuing Master's studies (by research) with a focus on neurodevelopmental learning needs of children and youth.

## The Centre for Neurodiversity@UJ

Under the leadership of Professor Maximus Monaheng Sefotho, coordinator of the Centre for Neurodiversity at UJ, the scholarship within this research centre seeks to support research with a focus on the neurodevelopmental learning needs of children and youth, especially the health and well-being of children with Down Syndrome.

This initiative by the Mpedi Family reflects their dedication to reshaping societal perspectives on neurodiversity and emphasises the importance of responding to the educational needs of children with neurodiverse learning needs appropriately through understanding and inclusivity.

The scholarship represents more than a financial aid programme. It aims to support the Centre for Neurodiversity@UJ to address global challenges in the field of neurodiversity and to facilitate meaningful research that contributes to a more inclusive and understanding society.

## **Mpedi's personal journey and advocacy for neurodiversity rights**

As a parent of a neurodivergent child, Mpedi has exceptional insight into how their unique cognitive landscape can contribute to a richer and more diverse tapestry of human intelligence which not only challenges conventional notions but also fosters a broader appreciation for the multifaceted nature of intellectual prowess.

“It is through education that we will empower as many people as possible. The idea of embracing neurodiversity opens up the opportunity for us to create a better-equipped society to support and nurture neurodivergent individuals.”

Mpedi argued that legal systems needed to better safeguard the rights of neurodivergent individuals, ensuring inclusive policies that respect and protect their inherent dignity while fostering an environment where their unique perspectives and capabilities are acknowledged and celebrated in the broader context of human rights.

According to the Neurodiversity Foundation, in South Africa, 10% of all children experience neurodivergence to differing degrees.

### **A more inclusive research landscape**

The launch of the Mpedi Family Neurodiversity Studies Scholarship is not just a singular event; it marks the beginning of a shared vision for an inclusive research landscape.

UJ looks forward to a future where the Mpedi Family Neurodiversity Studies Scholarship becomes a beacon for inclusive research, breaking down barriers and fostering a global community dedicated to understanding and embracing neurodiversity.

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