

Dr Nokwazi Carol Mbili



26 August 1985 – 6 May 2026

It is with profound sadness that we announce the sudden passing of our colleague, Dr Nokwazi Mbili. Her untimely departure has left a deep void in the School of Agriculture and Science and the broader Plant Pathology community.

Dr Mbili began her academic journey at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where she completed her undergraduate studies in Plant Pathology. Demonstrating both dedication and academic excellence, she went on to earn her MSc in the same discipline before pursuing a PhD at the University of Stellenbosch. Following the completion of her doctoral studies, she returned to her alma mater as a lecturer in Plant Pathology—a true example of “growing one’s own timber.”

In her academic role, Dr Mbili distinguished herself as a committed educator and a productive researcher. She approached her teaching with passion and care, earning consistently positive feedback from students who appreciated her clarity, approachability, and genuine investment in their success. Her research contributions strengthened the discipline and reflected her diligence and intellectual curiosity. Her work focused on post-harvest pathology, a critically important component of the agricultural value chain, where she contributed to advancing knowledge on reducing losses and improving food quality and security. In recognition of her achievements, she was promoted to Senior Lecturer.

Dr Mbili was also a dedicated mentor. Over the years, she successfully supervised numerous Honours, Master’s, and PhD students to completion. At the time of her passing, she was supervising four MSc and two PhD candidates, all of whom benefited from her guidance, encouragement, and high academic standards.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Dr Mbili will be remembered for her warm and engaging personality. She was widely liked and respected by colleagues, technical staff, and students alike. Her presence brought a sense of collegiality and positivity to the department, and she formed meaningful connections with many across the institution.

She also contributed actively to the professional community. Notably, she played a key role as a member of the organising committee for the highly successful 54th Congress of the Southern African Society for Plant Pathology, held in Umhlanga, Durban. In a memorable gesture that reflected both her creativity and her pride in local culture, she prepared a traditional KwaZulu-Natal brew that was shared during the opening ceremony—an act that left a lasting impression on all who attended.

Dr Mbili's contributions to Plant Pathology, her dedication to her students, and her vibrant spirit will be sorely missed. She leaves behind a legacy of excellence, mentorship, and kindness that will continue to inspire those who had the privilege of knowing and working with her.

Dr Mbili is survived by her mother, brother Celani, and daughter Ziyanda. Her mortal remains will be interred at Izingolweni, near Port Shepstone, on 16 May 2026.

Our thoughts and deepest condolences are with her family, friends, colleagues, and students during this difficult time. May her soul rest in peace.

Compiled by colleagues in the sub-discipline of Plant Pathology, School of Agriculture and Science