

A tribute to Prof Lungile Pepeta

From Prof Denise Zinn, colleague and former DVC Learning & Teaching, Mandela University

When Prof Lungile Pepeta joined Mandela University in 2017, we were completely captivated and inspired by his larger than life personality, his commitment to building and nurturing future healthcare workers and a system that could support better health care for everyone, especially the poor, in our province and country.

He was indefatigable. No challenge was too large for him. The opposite was true – the larger the challenge, the greater his determination.

He drove the efforts to establish the 10th Medical School and Programme in the country at Nelson Mandela University. He refused to be defeated or give up. His vision and energy ignited all of us to pick up the cudgels alongside him.

He looked out for those who were the underdogs, from students to staff who struggled as the recipients of systems and attitudes that remained unaware, that overlooked the impact of inequities that remain our legacy in our unequal society.

His compassion as a human being was deep and unwavering, and his warmth and humour drew everyone to him spontaneously, with such joyousness. He was the light and laughter in a room. He was honest and spoke his mind, clearly and incisively.

He seemed fearless, with boundless energy. Frequently I had to remind him to take care of himself, that he would burn out if he didn't slow down.

He lived into and up to multiple goals that were his passion and commitment in his short life-time. At 46, he accomplished more than most of us will in double that lifetime.

It is hard to imagine life, Mandela University, his Faculty, this province and country – indeed this world – without him.

He will remain forever the giant he was in our thoughts and hearts.

Rest in peace, beloved colleague.

We will miss you and love you always.