

INSPIRATIONAL students

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Don't limit yourself. Many people limit themselves to what they think they can do.

You can go as far as your mind lets you.

*What you believe, remember,
you can achieve.*

—Mary Kay Ash, founder Mary Kay Cosmetics





wela – growing women in the engineering field

We are extremely proud to present our second wela-cohort and we feel honoured to have the following enthusiastic members representing all that wela stands for: Philasande, Lavina, Aleena, Linda, Jerusha, Thokozani, Nosiphiwo, Nosipho, Mbalenhle, Majamana, Abongile, Yolo, Tiyani and Zola.

Not only do they share a passion for their various fields namely Industrial, Mechanical, Civil and Electrical Engineering as well as Mechatronics; but they share a passion for the promotion of women leaders in today's society.

We proudly report that the number of wela-girls has grown this year, which is evidence of success of the programme. We yet again offered developmental and support intervention workshops and in addition to this we also offered industry related short courses and the wela-girls designed a water-harvesting project. This year we will present the wela programme as an official NMMU short learning programme, thereby offering certificates to our wela-girls upon completion.

As you go through this booklet I am sure you too will see the impact that wela has had on these girls and why we are encouraged to go a step beyond with this programme. We are inspired by their growth each year and this drives us to continuously improve and expand the programme.

We look forward to welcoming you into our wela programme in 2013.

Ann

Philasande Ntongana

Mechanical Engineering Student



I am a first-year Mechanical Engineering student from Mthatha. I was raised in a single parent household and have learnt that I am the only person who can determine my future; I am the only person who can change what people think of me. My hobbies are watching movies and listening to music.

Being a part of WELA as a first-year student helped me to adjust to the new environment I found myself in. It helped me to make friends with girls in my discipline and other engineering disciplines. As a shy person I was put in situations where I had to express myself in front of other people and learned to overcome my fear of public speaking. The workshops we attended taught me to find my strengths and embrace them. I also learnt that my weaknesses can be changed into strengths through hard work and dedication but, most of all, I learnt that as an engineer, teamwork is the key

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to efficient production and service.

My highlight for this year was the “7 Choices of Successful Women” workshop where I learnt that each decision we make in life has an affect on our future. The “netiquette” workshop was also an eye opener for me because I did not know that potential employers also review the way a person conducts herself on the Internet (e.g. social media like Facebook). Qualifications alone won’t guarantee your success when applying for a position, you also need to pay careful attention to the way you present yourself.

Being a part of WELA has taught me that I’m not the only one who faces the fear of not being taken seriously as a female in a male-dominated profession. I have learnt how to express myself freely and confidently and lastly, I have learnt that I can achieve all the things that I set my mind to. WELA has taught me to be the best version of myself.

Lavina Yuyada

Civil Engineering Student

I am currently doing a BTech in Transportation Engineering (Civil Engineering) and I come from Africa's newest nation – the Republic of South Sudan. I love modelling, travelling, volley ball, soccer and basketball.

Being a part of the WELA team this year has presented a lot of benefits to me – from making new friends from different parts of engineering to being coupled with a mentor. In this challenging field of Engineering; guidance and advice from peers is greatly appreciated. It feels so good to enter a room filled entirely with females as opposed to a lecture room filled with males. It gives us an opportunity to share our common views – WELA not only connects us but also grooms us to become the aspiring engineers of tomorrow.

Every single workshop I attended has added value to my life. I enjoyed the “7 Choices of Successful Women” workshop and have learnt a great deal from all of the choices that we fleshed out. I learnt how to assess a situation and come up with a suitable resolution. Student



counselling development workshops encouraged me to learn about myself, my strengths and my weaknesses.

I have personally become more confident and positive and I am already looking forward to what WELA has in store for me next year. Thank you WELA for this golden opportunity.

Aleena Mathew

Electrical Engineering Student

I am currently working towards a BTech in Electrical Engineering. I enjoy grasping concepts in the field of Electrical Engineering and understanding the operation of systems we use in our everyday lives. In my spare time, I enjoy cooking, yoga, relaxing on the beach or spending quality time with friends and family.

WELA has several workshops and self-development programmes



that have helped us learn more about ourselves. Meeting women who are faced with similar situations and challenges has shown us how best to deal with our own circumstances.

The “7 Choices of Successful Women” was a powerful workshop highlighting the strength we have as young women. There are certain traits that are characteristic of women such as sensitivity, compassion, nurturing and a sense of service in general. These are often seen as traits that could make women incompetent as engineers and entrepreneurs, however, sensitivity and compassion towards your employees and co-workers will gain you immense respect. It is also said that service is the greatest form of influence.

Through WELA, I have come to understand my weaknesses and learnt ways to work around them and convert them into strengths – and then capitalise on these strengths.

...wela has several workshops and self-development programmes...

Linda N’dri Ahou

Civil Engineering Student

I am currently studying Civil Engineering (S4). I am originally from Cote d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast, West Africa), where I spent my entire childhood in the capital city, Ahidjan. Coming to South Africa in 2008 was a big challenge for me as my first language is French and I had to learn a new language (English). I enjoy dancing, listening to music, swimming and watching television.



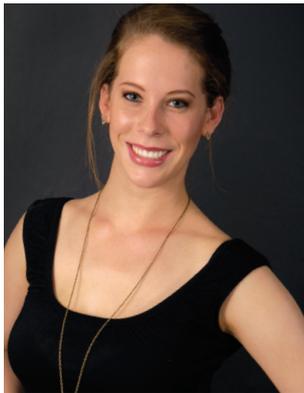
WELA has given me the chance to interact with other women on engineering related matters and exchange our experiences of being a woman in a male-dominated world. I have learnt to empower myself as a woman in this environment.

The numerous workshops that I attended have given me guidance and advice on aspects such as appearance and behaviour in the working world.

WELA has really empowered me as a young woman making her entrance into the engineering world. I would recommend the programme to all women.

Jerusha Van Den Heever

Mechatronics Student



I have always been interested in how systems work and finding ways of improving them, which is why I pursued a career in engineering. I am currently studying Mechatronics and aim to study Biomedical Engineering as a postgraduate degree. I am passionate about improving people's wellbeing through healthcare.

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 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.

Thokozani Zekevu

Civil Engineering Student



I am a 19-year-old female currently in my second year of Civil Engineering. I like reading books, watching movies, going out with friends and listening to music. I am talkative, assertive, a bit defensive at times, and emotional. I like meeting new people and I like smiling.

I have learned a lot from WELA and it has helped me become a better person. I have learnt how to address people appropriately and it has improved my communication skills. I have also learnt how to make my own choices in life and how to be responsible for every decision that I make. WELA has helped me grow spiritually and emotionally. I have also met other females who are studying engineering who I can talk to if I have a problem.

The "7 Choices of Successful Women" workshop was the best experience for me. It helped me let go of terrible experiences and deal with personal issues. I now have inner peace and am equipped

with knowledge and skills that I will need in the near future. I now have my picture of success: I know what I want in life and I know how to go about fulfilling my dreams.

Personally, I have grown immensely. I know how to handle conflict at work or at home and have learnt how to behave in a formal environment. WELA has helped me build my self-confidence.

Nosiphiwo Jozana

Civil Engineering Student

I am currently studying towards a National Diploma in Civil Engineering. I am originally from Motherwell in Port Elizabeth. I like listening to music, watching movies, baking and surfing the net.

Through my interaction with WELA, I have gained additional knowledge about the engineering field as well as an increased level



of self-confidence. We were given opportunities to attend workshops and these workshops have helped me with my academic, social and psychological development.

The highlight of the year for me must be the “7 Choices of Successful Women” workshop and the Chata Romano workshop. I now know how to handle myself in a workplace environment and Chata Romano showed me how to look presentable by combining the colours I have in my wardrobe.

I have met a lot of different people from different cultures and have managed to make friends and have fun with them. WELA has allowed me to discover things about myself – and we are also able to use the WELA room when we need “me” time.

...I have gained additional knowledge about the engineering field...



Nozuko Swapi

Civil Engineering Student

I'm from Queenstown and am currently studying towards a Diploma in Civil Engineering. Besides my studies, I enjoy going to the beach, hanging out with friends and listening to music. I enjoy performing arts and make sure I go and see a show at least once a month. I would love to own my own set of drums (and learn how to play them). I like reading inspirational books and I believe life is fair and that it's

never too late to do the right thing.

Through the WELA workshops and meetings, the biggest benefit for me has been acquiring a language that allows me to express myself and define precisely who I am and what I am all about. The opportunity to meet and get to know other ladies in the engineering department and the availability of the WELA room when I need to study are further benefits of belonging to this programme.

There have been quite a few, but if I had to pick one, it would definitely

be the "7 Choices of Successful Women" workshop.

I have gained extensive knowledge on "creating my own brand" and recognising what I would like to be known for.

Mbalenhle Mredlana

Civil Engineering Student



I am a young, cultured and ambitious individual who aspires to be a law-abiding, contributing citizen. Raised in the backdrop of Nelson Mandela's home, Mthatha, I have obtained values and morals that continue to inspire me to help make a difference in my community.

I am currently studying for a National Diploma in Civil Engineering at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and hope to eventually obtain my BSc in Civil

Engineering. I dream of one day opening my own Civil Engineering consulting firm. During my leisure time, I like playing basketball, writing and reading short stories and cooking up a storm.

WELA has ushered me into a journey of great self-discovery by exposing me to workshops that have equipped me with life tools I will be able to use in my personal, social and career life. The greatest benefit I attained from WELA was the realisation that I am an asset in the engineering field and hence I have gained more confidence and desire to grow within my field of study.

Having had many highlights this year with WELA, my greatest highlights would have to be the “7 Choices of Successful Women” workshop and the Women’s Day function. From these events, I learnt that all the feminine qualities that traditionally disqualify women from being great engineers in the industry are actually what makes us great engineers – and I have a clear understanding of the value of women in the field of engineering.

I have personally grown from the countless valuable encounters I have had with my fellow WELA mentees and mentors and have subsequently gained great confidence and skills which have enabled me to go out into the world and not only dream big and talk about my aspirations, but also act upon them. This has helped me step forward in my field of study and I am currently secretary of the NMMU South African Institute for Civil Engineers (SAICE) student chapter.

Majamana Nwabisa

Industrial Engineering Student



I am an Industrial Engineering student born and raised in Alexandria. I prefer listening to music as opposed to watching TV; I think this is because I was once in my school choir and spent most of my time in practice sessions.

Thanks to the WELA workshops I have attended, I have changed the way I view the world. I also got the chance to meet students I never knew before and interact with women who are already in the working world.

From the interactions with these women, I have received advice on how to handle various challenges on campus and in the working world.

I have also learnt how to dress appropriately for a work situation as well as how to conduct myself at functions and over the internet.

Another aspect that was highlighted as being very important was

maintaining a portfolio and documenting all work completed and workshops attended, as this can all be included in my resume.

At the True Colours workshop I learnt that we are not all the same and I have since learnt to accept all the differences that make us unique.

The WELA room has allowed me to work in peace without disruptions and, finally, WELA has shown me that commitment is vitally important.

The Chata Romano workshop was the highlight of my year. As an Industrial engineer, it was so interesting to see that you can always do more with less.

I gained the confidence required to speak publicly and I learnt to think on my feet as there were often times where we had to brainstorm and come up with a solution in record time.

As an Industrial Engineer, it was so interesting to see that you can always do more with less.

Abongile M Ngacu

Electrical Engineering Student

I am currently in my second year in Electrical Engineering at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU).

I was born and raised in Butterworth. I came to Port Elizabeth in 2006 when I was in grade10. Coming from a small village, I did not like the city very much initially as it was too big and crowded for me. Over the years I have become accustomed to big city life and have come to love this place. In my spare time, I love watching movies and cooking.

I am obsessed with saving money. I enjoy my alone time and I love to share my views with other people.

One of the benefits of belonging to WELA is that women in engineering have a lovely hiding place here at NMMU where we can gather, socialise and make friends. I have realised that in spite of the engineering field



...wela has helped us learn how to deal with these emotions and use them to our benefit...

being male dominated, we as women can do much better than men. As women, we are very in touch with our emotions in general and WELA has helped us learn how to deal with these emotions and use them to our benefit in the working field.

My highlight was the “netiquette and etiquette” workshop. I learnt that sending an email or text message in anger will leave you with regret. I now think twice before I do something that I might regret. The other highlight for me was the “7 Choices of Successful Women” workshop. Here I learnt never to settle for anything and to always strive for the best.

With WELA I have learnt something that was difficult for me to do – which is saying NO. I always put other people’s needs before my own and I find myself in situations that leave me feeling uncomfortable.

I am the kind of person who likes to be independent and in control of anything and everything I do, but through WELA I learnt that I also need help from time to time and that there is no shame in asking for assistance when I need it. I have been inspired to keep believing in myself and to carry on dreaming.

Yolo Mpoxela

Civil Engineering Student



I am an honest, grounded person who stands by her beliefs and values in all situations. I am humble and I like challenges because they leave me with a sense of accomplishment.

One of the main benefits of WELA is that you learn about your strengths and weaknesses and are given the opportunity to interact with women of different age groups and cultures. You grow accustomed to handling a number of different situations.

The highlight of my year has been getting to know all the WELA girls and making new friends. Before, I would have passed them in the passage without even greeting them – but now that is all in the past.

I have gained a lot from WELA as I now know how to interact with other people. I also know my strengths and weaknesses and how to use them to my advantage.

Tiyani Ndlovu

Civil Engineering Student

I am ambitious, tenacious and enthusiastic. I am inspired by my challenges and motivated by my failures. I believe that what you give out you get back. Just like in Civil Engineering, where there are complex buildings that end up in beauty, I am a complex flower that radiates inner beauty to the outside world. If you have been blessed with a passion, nothing is impossible.



One of the benefits of WELA is that you are linked with a mentor to help you sail through the challenges, sad days and happy times of engineering. Having access to our own room, which we have been able to use for studying, sessions and relaxing, is amazing. Getting to know other women in engineering has been the most inspiring, motivating and humbling experience.

Every WELA moment has been a highlight, including learning how to look fabulous yet professional in the workplace as an aspiring civil technician. Always being welcomed with beautiful, sweet cupcakes

has been a reminder of sweet happiness and being part of the WELA family.

One benefit has been learning to love this male-dominated industry while being true and sincere to yourself. I will always embrace the challenges that come my way as they inspire me to be a better person. My passion for engineering has been confirmed and I have learnt that first impressions always last the longest. Thank you WELA for a great year.

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Zola Mpange

Industrial Engineering Student

I am an ambitious young individual who would like to be an inspiration to others one day. I tend to come across as shy sometimes, but it's because I'm reserved and tend to keep to myself. I used to be active, but I can't seem to find the time within my busy schedule. I love travelling long distances and I like Mathematics and calculating. I like being social and being with friends as it gives me an opportunity to get to know people who make me grow as an individual.



WELA has been great for me in terms of getting to know more people in different engineering disciplines on campus. It has helped me become more social outside of just the Mechanical and Industrial Engineering group. The workshops we attended have also helped us learn to cope

with the pressures we are going to experience in the future and when we work in industry. WELA has also helped me uncover and discover my true abilities and strengths in everything that I do. WELA has also taught me the importance of professionalism and proper etiquette in the world of business.

Meeting new people and the experience and leadership qualities acquired from our workshops have been of major benefit to me. The fun interactive games and development exercises we did at some of our workshops allowed us to discover ourselves and uncover many personal facets we tend to lock away. We also received valuable advice on how to handle different situations.

I believe I have gained friendships through WELA and have grown as a person. WELA has sort of become my second family of friends with whom I can sit and discuss personal and academic issues. We are growing as young women and we now have the skills and knowledge to overcome challenges that we will face as students and as women working in a male-dominated industry.



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)

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