

# Outstanding Associate Professor Khole Gwebu sets high bar in teaching, research

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When [Khole Gwebu](#) was young, the last thing in the world he thought he would be is a scholar. With two educators for parents, he understood the life of an academic and resolutely wanted to pursue a career outside academia.

Life, however, had different plans. These days, Gwebu admits with a laugh that his parents “may have been on to something.” As an exemplary researcher and beloved decision sciences faculty for both undergraduate and graduate courses at Paul College, Gwebu was recently awarded the 2021 [University of New Hampshire’s Outstanding Associate Professor award](#).

“I was surprised, to be honest! And, of course, extremely happy. And humbled. I mean, come on. Me?” Gwebu said. “I’m also so grateful to the colleagues who nominated me. There’s a bunch of emotions. When you interact with people at Paul, at UNH, and see the work they’re doing... I don’t know how they chose me. I just try to do the best I can.”

Gwebu’s best certainly sets a high bar: his research is consistently published in top-tier journals in the field of information systems, with his most recent pursuits in data security. More than two-thirds of his 20 peer-reviewed publications are in A+ or A-level journals and his work has garnered more than 1000 citations. He is a dedicated professor and speaks passionately about the transformation students undergo in their years as undergraduates, master’s candidates, and young professionals.

“I love working with young minds and watching them grow. From a teaching perspective that’s what fulfills me. A lot of freshmen, they’re confused when they arrive at UNH, they don’t know or are unsure what they want to do. Which is fine! We all are perplexed as freshmen,” Gwebu said. “But it’s so nice to see the level of maturity they gain through the college years, and then when they come back after work. Academically and professionally, in how they think about things. It’s incredible.”

“I think a lot of people do this job because of that. There are a lot of challenges, obviously. It’s no walk in the park. But you can directly impact people’s lives in a positive way.”

Gwebu has made significant contributions to curriculum development in Paul College, helping to revise and update the core curriculum in the [Information Systems and Business Analytics option](#), which has seen enrollments grow by more than 80% in the past five years. He currently serves as chair of the Decision Sciences Department and Business Administration Department, and as a member of Paul College’s Executive Committee and academic leadership team.

Recently Gwebu worked closely with Dean Deborah Merrill-Sands on development of a successful \$6 million gift proposal to expand and deepen the college’s work in the rapidly growing field of [business analytics](#).

“I admire and appreciate Khole’s deep commitment to excellence in all aspects of his work in research, teaching and service, for his collegiality and generosity in collaborating and supporting his colleagues’ work and interests, and for his leadership dedicated to strengthening not only his department but also Paul College,” Merrill-Sands said.

In his undergraduate days, Gwebu pursued a B.Com Accounting degree at the National University of Lesotho, but found that all though he enjoyed accounting he didn't feel fulfilled working in accounting. Soon after graduating, Gwebu began teaching a course in financial accounting at the University of Botswana. He was so young that students often walked into his class and asked him, "Where's the professor?" His two years there solidified a growing love of teaching.

Ultimately, Gwebu's parents persuaded him to instead pursue a master's degree at their alma mater, Kent State. Through his MBA courses, Gwebu finally discovered his life's passion: information systems. He loved the fast pace of the field and its integration with technology. A poor job market convinced him to continue into the Ph.D. program, and from there he was suddenly on track for professorship in the US. He came to UNH in 2006 and has lived and worked here ever since. It's a life he never dreamed of – yet somehow, his passion.

Outstanding faculty awards are prestigious university achievements granted to professors whose accomplishments in the areas of teaching, research, and service are prodigious and of the highest quality. As noted in the description for Outstanding Associate Professor Award, "He or she is an inspiring, challenging, and effective teacher, whose concern and respect for students is evident both in and out of the classroom. Such a faculty member makes important and extensive contributions to his or her chosen field and shares those contributions with peers through publication or other appropriate means. Finally, the ideal faculty member willingly and effectively devotes time and energy in useful service to the university, the profession, and the state."

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