



Jenna Farrell:

From the 3rd to the 5th of September 2025, I had the privilege of travelling to Joburg with some of my fellow EGS peers to present our research at the Society of South African Geographers 2025 Student Conference, hosted by the University of Johannesburg. The Conference theme was - *Geography and Sustainability: How Can We Shape a Better World for All?*

The Conference not only gave us the opportunity to present our work, it also allowed us to gain new perspectives from fellow Geographers, build new connections and be reminded of the incredibly transdisciplinary nature of our studies.

Participating in and attending this conference left us feeling enlightened, excited about our research and grateful for the opportunity to present our work and receive constructive feedback.

Chloe Naidoo:

Attending the SSAG conference was such a valuable and memorable experience for me. One of the biggest highlights was getting the chance to present my research on water resources management. It was a little nerve-wracking at first, but once I got into it, I felt more confident, and sharing my work with others was really rewarding. The feedback and different opinions I received were so helpful, as they pushed me to think about my project from new angles and consider ideas I might not have thought of on my own.

¹ Image supplied by the UJ Geography, Environmental Management & Energy Studies Department, 2025

What I also enjoyed was being able to sit in on the wider geography sessions. It was fascinating to see how diverse the field really is, with topics ranging from human geography to environmental change. Even though my focus was on water resources, I found that so many of the themes connected back to my own interests. It made me appreciate just how interdisciplinary geography is and how important collaboration across different fields can be when tackling big issues like sustainability and resource management.

Overall, the SSAG conference gave me more confidence in myself as a researcher, exposed me to fresh perspectives, and left me feeling motivated to keep growing in my work.

Philip Samura: ²

My dissertation focuses on Colonial Legacies and Forest Management in Gola Rainforest National Park: Pathways for Decolonial Transformations. I presented my preliminary findings at the SSAG. It was my first time presenting my work in such a forum. The conference gave me an excellent opportunity to hone my research communication skills, which are crucial for an emerging scholar.

The feedback I received was enlightening and acknowledged the significance of my study to current conservation discourse. This truly inspired me. The chance to provide feedback to my colleagues was equally fulfilling and reminded me of the significance of effective feedback in scholarship.

I appreciate the support and direction of my supervisors, Prof. Rachel Wynberg and Dr. Sthembile Ndwadwe, Madam Fahdelah Hartley, and the entire Environmental and Geographical Sciences faculty and staff at UCT.



² Image supplied by Philip Samura, 2025



Laveen Safary:³

Various research presentations were done by fellow postgraduate students from many universities within SA. I was particularly interested in the Sustainable Waste Management stream and therefore I attended those sessions for most part of the conference.

Students presented their research on various waste streams such as pharmaceutical household waste, construction and demolition waste; their socio-economic and environmental impacts and their sustainability. Across these value chains comes the need for circular economy principles especially of recycling, creating awareness to the community and incentivizing waste collection programs to enhance behaviour change and create opportunities to improve livelihoods.

Participating in the Q&As also helped in understanding my research focus even more. I learnt a lot in terms of how to approach my research methodology and recommendations to ensure environmental sustainability and socio-economic development that enhances livelihoods. It was worth the trip!

³ Image supplied by the UJ Geography, Environmental Management & Energy Studies Department, 2025

Jenna Farrell:

On the final day of the Conference, a few of us joined the Urban Geography field trip to Soweto and surrounds, where we learnt more about the history of the area, the distinct layouts of our urban cities and the unique challenges we face in reducing spatial segregation.

Whilst we visited several landmarks in Soweto (including the FNB Stadium, the Soweto Towers and Walter Sisulu Square), I felt that the visit to the Hector Pieterse Memorial was the most impactful.

The field trip gave us a great opportunity to connect further with students from other universities and discuss the unique benefits and challenges of our home cities. Attending the field trip was an excellent way to end off our conference experience. Pictured here is one of Soweto's urban parks, where we stopped to eat our lunch.



We are grateful for the support and guidance from the Environmental and Geographical Sciences Department at UCT.
Written by: Chloe Naidoo, Philip Samura, Laveen Safary and Jenna Farrell

⁴ Image supplied by Zoe Sihlobo, 2025