

# Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA



University of Venda



@Univenofficial



universityofvenda



University of Venda Official



University of Venda  
Creating future leaders

## Closer ties between Univen and University of Virginia

As part of an exchange programme, 20 students from the University of Virginia recently joined an orientation workshop at Univen.

"Make friends here and experience the Vhavenda culture," said the Dean of the School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences, Prof Natasha Potgieter.

"Univen students will make you feel welcome, as they are caring people. This international collaboration is important to both universities. This is a flagship project and we wish to create strong connection with the surrounding communities to solve societal issues. We hope your research will help us to find solutions for both our communities."

"The two universities' collaboration of more than 20 years proves that nothing is impossible," said Univen's Research Professor at the School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences, Prof Pascal Bessong.

"This collaboration empowers both universities to achieve set goals in terms of human development. Almost all Univen's schools are involved in this collaboration and they are ready to strengthen this long-lasting network."

"This collaboration will continue to have a good impact on many peoples' lives," said Associate Professor in the School of Nursing at the University of Virginia, Prof Cathy Campbell. "It will continue to expand in the health field."

"We encourage the research problems to come from communities," said Univen's Community Engagement Officer, Nakisani Nematodzi.

"We have a goal-orientated interaction, negotiated collaboration and partnership between the university and communities. This helps us to find solutions to the problems that our communities are facing. We develop multicultural understanding and respect for local knowledge and differences within communities. We also encourage students to do their own community engagements," she said.

"You need to help our people in deep rural villages to protect themselves from diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV," said the Deputy Secretary General of Univen's SRC, Tshepo Raseala.

"Univen has extra-mural activities that visiting students can learn a lot from. We have cultural groups in which you can learn how to dance, cook,

greet and also learn about the traditional dress code," he said.

Master of Science in Global Health from Duke University in China, Taylor Allen, said that she has a deep love for Univen and the surrounding communities.

"I am happy to be back here. I always feel at home. I chose to do my research here because of the good experience and hospitality that I was given here previously."

The Chief Administrative Officer of the Directorate of International Relations, Dr Segun Obadire, anchored the orientation programme.

He introduced them to social integration programmes such as the Buddy programme, country independence days and the internationalisation evening. The visitors were given pamphlets with among others, basic local languages. They were taken through some phrases, explaining how to greet in Tshivenda.

Univen's arts and cultural groups performed during the programme.



"You have my support" - Potgieter.



"The School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences is building a lasting network" - Bessong.



"This collaboration will have good impact in many peoples' lives" - Campbell.



"We want academics with passion" - Nematodzi.



"Also participate in extra-mural activities" - Raseala.



"I am delighted to be back" - Allen.



The cooperation team - Univen and University of Virginia representatives.

## Read inside

Univen students benefit from Absa scholarship	2
From university drop-out to graduate	2
Thohoyandou celebrates World Environment Day	2
Greening organisation joins forces with Limpopo	3
Celebrating cultural diversity	3
Learning more about epilepsy	3
Ekosse appointed as Senior Professor	4
Labour department educates Employment Equity Forum	4
New water quality technology demonstrated	4
New Deputy Vice Chancellor Operations for Univen	5
Minister Maswanganyi urges Univen alumni to give freely	5
Amplifying Community Voices assists learners	5
Decolonise modern culture - Heritage Ambassador	6
IMPALA does internationalisation training at Univen	6



# Univen students benefit from Absa scholarship



An exciting partnership in a time of transformation – Absa’s Mudhav and Univen’s Mbat.



Deserving students – from left, Thabang Baloyi, Mpho Denga, Mandla Shikwambana, Israel Mkhathshwa, Sandile Bob Masango, Absa’s Umesh Mudhav and Ronewa Bamuza.

In a commitment to widen access to higher education as part of a group-wide CEO Scholarship Programme, Absa recently donated R5 million to Univen.

This contribution is supporting 191 deserving Univen students undertaking a three-year undergraduate degree in commerce, humanities, engineering or science and technology, on the basis of their academic excellence. Of these students, 89 are first entering and 102 are returning students. Last year, Absa funded 21 students with R500 000.

“All students should have an equal opportunity to learn,” said Absa’s Provincial Head of Business Banking, Umesh Mudhav.

“We are excited to be in partnership with Univen in its time of transformation. The country is faced with challenges such as maths and science. We need producers of technology and producers of ideas that can make everything great for our youth and our economy. Absa is passionate about addressing the issue of the missing middle,” he said.

“As the majority of our students come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, this funding will play a major role in shaping their future,” said Univen’s Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbat.

“It will also serve as a motivation in students’ performance. We call on other companies to follow suit to deal with the financial burden our students have to bear. In terms of curriculum transformation, we have introduced a number of exciting new programmes which are intended to address the skills gap in our region. These include the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants-supported BCom Accounting Sciences which will allow us to train chartered accounts. We are also introducing programmes in engineering,” he said.

On behalf of the beneficiaries, third year BCom Accounting student, Ronewa Bamuza, thanked Absa.

“We know what is expected from us as students - we will give our best.”

“I am delighted as Absa is really doing a good job.”

“With Absa’s funding, I will be able to graduate,” said final year BCom Accounting student, Thabang Baloyi. “The funding makes me determined to work hard.”

SRC President Mandla Shikwambana commended Absa for their contribution that will reduce the financial burden on students.

“The initiative is very encouraging. With your support, more students will be graduating.”

“Students drop out because of financial problems, since the National Student Financial Aid Scheme cannot cater for all students,” said Univen’s Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford.

“Absa is stepping into the bridge of education. We want to see our students completing their studies within the stipulated time.”

The ceremony was also attended by the Acting Executive Mayor, Councillor Munyai.



“We will give our best” – Bamuza.



“Absa is stepping into the bridge of education” - Crafford and Mgobo.

## From university drop-out to graduate

“Time is always available to all of us. The difference is how you use time together with your everyday life,” says Thilivhali Sitkhitha, a director of Khano Agri Innovation, herbologist and new BCom Economics graduate of Univen.

“Life is a journey where people travel daily through their experiences.”

Sikhitha grew-up in a family of traditionalists who always shared their traditional performances. He therefore developed an interest in herbs.

“In 2010, I moved back to Mukula where I started farming in Mutshundudi. My uncle shared information about indigenous herbs and how they are used. I searched the internet for information on indigenous and other tribal herbs. I learnt that even if you run a company or hold a big position, you should always remember that education is the key to a world of success.”

In 2013 he decided to go back to university to complete his degree. He graduated at the recent Univen graduation ceremony.

“While studying I started to produce organic spice and indigenous medicine, combining my knowledge and that of my forefathers. The journey became easier and interesting and I discovered solutions to solve chronic diseases, using indigenous knowledge.”

Sikhitha is a passionate person, aiming to enrol for another degree soon and also to have other businesses related to herbs and medicines.

“I want to go for permaculture training, undertake formal research in indigenous knowledge skills in medicine, publish journals or even do a second degree in either agricultural or food science. And then I have a passion to have about 1 000 hectares of land which will be divided into plots for botanical gardens, a game reserve, an indigenous food hub, medicinal farming, organic farming, indigenous food and medicine processing,” said Sikhitha.



Thilivhali Sitkhitha – director, herbologist and a new Bachelor of Commerce in Economics graduate.

## Thohoyandou celebrates World Environment Day

Hundreds of people from all corners of the Thulamela Municipality – from councillors to companies – participated in 2017 World Environment Day by cleaning up Thohoyandou town, including the taxi and bus ranks.

The event was a partnership between Tshikova Environmental, Universal Greening, the University of Venda’s Universal Greening Organisation and the regional Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism.



Stakeholders clean up in the Thohoyandou CBD.



# Greening organisation joins forces with Limpopo

The University of Venda's Universal Greening Organisation joined forces with the University of Limpopo recently. Lindelani Maraganedzha, an honours student in Environmental Sciences at Univen and co-founder of the organisation, announced the cooperation agreement.

"We will celebrate Arbour Day, which will be hosted by the University of Limpopo. University of Limpopo students will also form part of the Universal Greening Organisation's annual conference, themed 'Green Economy'," said Maraganedzha.

"It is gratifying that the two universities met, not as competitors, but working together in solving community problems," said Prof Antoaneta

Letsoalo of Limpopo's Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism.

"With this small effort we have started solving the problem that is faced by the entire world," said the Head of the Department of Development Planning and Management, Matshidiso Mathebula.

Talifhani Tshitwamulomoni, an honours student in Environmental Sciences at Univen and the founder of the Universal Greening Organisation said: "We spot members with potential and leadership skills and propose that they voluntarily lead the organisation after the ex-officio who are graduating and exiting the organisation. However, previous leaders will always be there and help where necessary."



*"We are solving the problem that the world faces" - Mathebula.*



*"We spot members with potential and leadership skills" - Tshitwamulomoni.*

## Celebrating cultural diversity

The acquisition of intercultural competencies by all students is one of the core outcomes of internationalisation.

Among the strategies which Univen utilises to ensure that all students have an opportunity to acquire intercultural competencies during their studies is the facilitation of social integration between local and international students. This allows for co-curricular intercultural learning.

Univen recently celebrated its cultural diversity at the second internationalisation evening, organised by the Directorate International Relations, the Student Representative Council and Univen's International Students Union.

More than 150 students and staff members participated in the event, themed Mutual appreciation.

The SRC's Minister of Information, Internal and External Affairs, Gift Mulaudzi, welcomed the guests, while the programme was directed by Univen Community Radio presenters Lindokuhle Shongwe and Mr Collins The Legend. The programme included a cultural parade and tasting of a wide variety of foods, ranging from traditional Venda to traditional Belgian food.

The Acting Director of Student Affairs, Lutando Charlie, emphasised the importance of diversity and internationalisation for growing Univen.

A World Café session, facilitated by the Director of International Relations, Cornelius Hagenmeier, explored how xenophobia can be countered at Univen. Small group conversations examined interventions and created awareness that it is important to work together to prevent xenophobia. This will ensure that the Univen community continues to uphold its spirit of being united in its diversity.



*A world in one country - Students with cultural outfits and flags from global countries.*



*"Diversity and internationalisation grows Univen" - Charlie.*



*Diverse actors performing diverse acts.*



*Cultural dancers showing Univen's diverse community.*

# Learning more about epilepsy

South Africa commemorated National Epilepsy Day on 21 June. To raise awareness about the condition, Univen masters student in Public Health, Pfarelo Ndou, advised people to be cautious about epilepsy.

"Epilepsy is a chronic disorder, which is characterised by recurrent, unprovoked seizures," said Ndou.

"It is a disorder with many potential causes. Anything that disturbs the normal pattern of neuron activity in the brain - from illness to brain damage to abnormal brain development - can lead to seizures. Epilepsy may develop because of an abnormality in brain wiring, an imbalance of nerve signalling chemicals called neurotransmitters, or a combination of these factors.

"Although it cannot be treated, it can be controlled. Neurologists can prescribe medication that control epileptic seizures. The medication is mainly anticonvulsant drugs. The type of treatment prescribed will depend on several factors, including the frequency and severity of the seizures and the person's age, overall health, and medical history. An accurate diagnosis of the type of epilepsy is also critical in choosing the best treatment for epileptic people.

"For a person to be diagnosed with epilepsy, they have to suffer from one or more seizures that were not caused by some known and reversible medical condition like alcohol withdrawal or extremely low blood sugar. The seizures in epilepsy may be related to a brain injury or a family tendency, but often the cause is completely unknown," he said.

"In terms of treatment, many drugs are available to treat epilepsy. Although generic drugs are safely used for most medications, anticonvulsants are one category where doctors proceed with caution. Medications include Carbamazepine (Tegretol or Carbatrol), Diazepam (Valium) and similar tranquilizers, such as lorazepam (Ativan), Tranxene and clonazepam (Klonopin), Eslicarbazepine (Aptiom), Ethosuximide (Zarontin), Felbamate (Felbatol) and Gabapentin (Neurontin)"

Ndou said as is factual of all drugs, the drugs used to treat epilepsy have side effects.

"The occurrence of side effects depends on the dose, type of medication and length of treatment. The side effects are usually more common with higher doses, but tend to be less severe with time as the body adjusts to the medication.

"Anti-epileptic drugs are usually started at lower doses and increased gradually to make this adjustment easier. Side effects of epilepsy include blurry visions or double vision, fatigue, sleepiness, unsteadiness and stomach upset. It also includes skin rashes, low blood cell counts and liver problems.

"Dilantin and phenytoin (Phenytek) can cause the gums to swell and valproate (Depakene) can cause hair loss and weight gain. There are other unique side effects depending on the person receiving the medication.

"Pregnant women who are epileptic should take some of the precautions to reduce the risk for malformations developing in a foetus. They

must have a full neurological evaluation prior to conception during pregnancy. Switch to the lowest possible dose monotherapy before becoming pregnant. Take daily multivitamin supplements with folate. Undergo a thorough ultrasound examination at 16 to 18 weeks of gestation and have amniocentesis and alpha-fetoprotein tests.

"Seizures can potentially affect a developing foetus by decreasing oxygen or blood supply to the

womb, so the decision to reduce dosage should only be made at the preference of a physician who understands the biological and physiological patterns of epilepsy.

"There are no other options to treat epilepsy but they can adjust their life to live with epilepsy, including not locking rooms, being around family and friends, joining a support group and visiting a counsellor or psychologist," he said.



*"Epilepsy can be controlled" - Ndou.*



# Ekosse appointed as Senior Professor



Univen’s Director: Research and Innovation, Prof Georges Ekosse, has been promoted to Senior Professor of Applied Clay Mineralogy and Environmental Geology.

He has been a full professor since 2008, a fellow since 2009, governing council regional representative for Southern Africa from 2009 to 2014 and Secretary General of the African Academy of Sciences from 2014.

Ekosse has been a member of the African Academy of Sciences’ Advisory Committee on Space, Earth and Environmental Sciences since 2014, as well as its Management Committee. He is a Life Member of the Geological Society of Africa as well as of the Association of Geoscientists for International Development. He is also a Member of the

International Academy of Environmental Sciences and of its Scientific Committee and a Member of the Soil Science Society of Southern Africa.

He is a Member of the International Association for the Study of Clays, a Member of the Southern Africa Research and Innovation Management Association and a Member of the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.

Ekosse has over 25 years of tertiary teaching and professional experience and more than ten years of university senior management experience. He received several national and international scholarly accolades and awards. He is a National Research Foundation C2 rated Researcher, Adjunct Research Professor at the Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Kakamega, Kenya and Deputy Chairperson of the Limpopo Research Forum.

Prior to his appointment as Director of Research and Innovation at Univen, he was Director of Research Development at the Walter Sisulu University and the Maiden Coordinator of Geology, Mining and Minerals Programmes at the University of Limpopo. He has equally held other positions in Botswana, Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal and USA.

Ekosse is passionate about the mentoring and promotion/supervision of colleagues and postgraduate students and has trained many - some have become National Research Foundation-rated researchers and/or professors. Presently he is promoting four PhD and supervising six MSc students. He has attracted and managed

more than 40 different research and research management grants.

He is the project leader of the International Geosciences Programme of UNESCO project 545 - Clays and Clay Minerals in Africa. He also leads the National Research Foundation-sponsored projects on cretaceous-tertiary Kaolins in Africa and trends of recent transformation of landscape based on rocks and soils data: Mineralogy, Geochemistry and Geography - SA-Russia.

Ekosse is involved in the inclusive innovation of the indigenous usage of soils and clays within traditional Africa, the human and enzootic geophagia in Southern Africa, the African Clays and Clay Minerals Research Group and the Technology Innovation Agency’s sponsored project on geophagic infusion and geophagic bar.

A scholar par excellence, he has more than 300 publications which include four books, ten book chapters, 142 peer reviewed journal articles, 55 refereed articles in conference/workshop proceedings, 60 conference/workshop/seminar papers, six technical reports, one article in a popular magazine, five edited works, two published book reviews, five articles in non-refereed journals and 20 posters.

The realisation of Univen’s strategic objective - Advancing the research and innovation mandate as stipulated in the university’s strategic plan for 2012 – 2016 - has annually gained higher grounds of achievement under Ekosse’s leadership. This is particularly in the areas of advancing the research

and innovation mandate, research administration and data management, postgraduate studies, technology transfer, linkages, partnership, internationalisation and community engagement and financial sustainability.

Univen was allocated 271.63 units for research publications output for 2015 - an increase of 44.12 units from the 227.51 units in 2014. In 2012 the university had only 127.85 units.

The number of National Research Foundation-rated researchers has increased from 14 in 2012 to 27 currently. The university has also experienced notable growth in numbers of Professors Emeriti, Adjunct Professors, Visiting Professors and Postdoctoral Fellows.

More staff and students have been supported to attend conferences than before his arrival at Univen. The university is enjoying a significant increase in registered research projects which are very well executed. Research collaborations and networks have positively expanded, and geometric growth of masters and doctorate graduates recorded. Several workshops, conferences and seminars are being organised to enhance a strong research culture.

Ekosse has built the Directorate of Research and Innovation from one contract staff member to its current 18. Through proposals he received funding from the Department of Higher Education and Training, The National Intellectual Property Management Office and the National Research Foundation for support of six of the positions.

## Labour department educates Employment Equity Forum

“There is no doubt that we will come out of this meeting highly educated,” said Univen’s Director of Human Resources, Tshililo Manenzhe.

Welcoming members of the Employment Equity Forum at the Employment Equity Acts briefing session recently, Manenzhe said the aim was to educate members about the Act, affirmative action and how to run the forum.

“Univen requested the Department of Labour to assist with regards to employment equity, especially capacitating the forum,” said the team leader of Employment Equity at the Department of Labour Inspection and Enforcement Services, Azwinndini Themeli.

“Do not be surprised if the commission requests to visit Univen later this year. There is a concern raised that universities are not doing well in terms of hiring coloured and Indian employees.

“Employment equity is about promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in the workplace.

This means employers must eliminate discrimination and implement affirmative action measures to deal with those who do not abide in the workplace. Affirmative action is the core of the Employment Equity Act and it says that suitable, qualified people must be given equal employment opportunities and they should also receive fair treatment.”

He said Univen should find ways to attract students and employees from other races.

“One of the suggestions was to conduct interviews with people from other races to understand what would be the best way to attract them to enrol at this university and to work for it. After the interviews, forum members are expected to give justification of their findings. There is a need for representatives from people with disabilities and white females in the forum and at Univen at large.

“You are on the right path in terms of developing structures and adhering to the Employment Equity Act,” he said.



Tshililo Manenzhe highlights the Employment Equity Act.



“Universities are not doing well in appointing coloureds and Indians” – Themeli.



Learning about employment equity at the Employment Equity Forum.

## New water quality technology demonstrated

The Univen community recently attended a presentation about the Dropslink device at the School of Environmental Sciences’ Computational Lab.

Samendra Prasad, an undergraduate student from the University of Virginia’s Centre for Global Health, a Jefferson scholar, presented some of the final project products.

Prasad was developing water quality monitoring technology or monitoring sensors that send information directly from the monitoring site to a website. It can be used as a management tool to inform stakeholders via the website, e-mail or cell phones about their water quality status.

“I created the Dropslink device to make information about water quality sources accessible to everyone in a situation when there is no internet access. You can still get real time data information with this device and I want the researchers to get raw data.

“I want this device to be in rural areas with 2G network so that people will be able to text. The benefits are that it can text data to a database which will then store information and make it available over the internet.

“So it is an internet without the internet. The SMS system within this device is sufficiently robust. It also provides accurate results.

“Temperature probes are accurate within 1C. Latitude and longitude are more accurate than the ones from cell phones.

“In terms of the future, I will expand sensor array, flow rate, PH, salinity and ion concentrations. I also

want to redesign battery interface and improve physical design.

“The design is user friendly and people can also receive calls from those devices. There is a high adoption interest across multiple fields and academics value real-time information.”



Samendra Prasad putting the Dropslink equipment through its paces.



Lecturers and students – all came to review the Dropslink device.



# New Deputy Vice Chancellor Operations for Univen

Dr Robert Martin has been appointed as Univen's Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations on a five-year performance-based contract from July.

"I believe that every individual has the potential to become the greatest (s)he can be, if given the space to perform. Thus, dignity and respect is the biggest and best gifts we can give to others. I am really looking forward to work and engage with all colleagues to make Univen an employer of choice and a university that is globally recognised and respected whilst also locally relevant," said Martin.

"We welcome Dr Martin and look forward to his contribution to the development of the university, and in particular to give impetus to most projects which are still under construction and those that are still coming," said Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatia.

"I believe he will also support all staff members and students to reach their maximum potential. We

wish him everything of the best during his tenure – please give him your full support to succeed."

Before joining Univen Martin was the Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor: Governance, Operations and Transformation, whilst also serving as Executive Director: Strategic Alliances at the Vaal University of Technology. He previously served as Campus Principal at the same institution's Secunda campus. He served on the university's Executive Management Committee, Senate and various other institutional committees.

Martin's thesis for his PhD in entrepreneurship entailed an investigation into the knowledge requirements for entrepreneur and small business support practitioners. His MBA dissertation was titled 'The application of the theory of constraints to a business development centre'. He also holds a diploma in Social Work, a postgraduate diploma in Social Development, Plan and Management.

Martin started his career as a social worker, moved into human resources and then business. He worked in both the public and private sectors. Over the years he developed skills in strategic planning, general management, human resources, labour relations, executive and business coaching.

He was appointed as a part-time commissioner for the CCMA in 1997. He was also a panelist for the Health and Social Services Bargaining Council as well as the Government and Public Services Sector Bargaining Council.

Martin was appointed by the Minister of Higher Education as a member of the Board of the National Institute of Higher Education in the Northern Cape and served as Chairperson from February 2012 until its disestablishment in 2014. During this term, he also served as member of the board's Finance Committee and Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee.



Dr Robert Martin, new Deputy Vice Chancellor Operations

## Minister Maswanganyi urges Univen alumni to give freely

"South Africa's fiscus is currently constrained and available funding is not sufficient for all the sectors," said the Minister of Transport, Joe Maswanganyi.

Speaking at the recent re-launch of the Univen Polokwane Alumni Chapter, Maswanganyi said working with the local industry, alumni can play a major role in funding university research that will grow the economy of the country.

"We need to improve humanity and help augment student funding. You can give freely as an expression of caring for mankind by donating for either specific or non-tagged purposes. You can enhance revenue for students and further help towards partnerships with the university to fund research, infrastructural development and student bursaries. All of this will assist in taking Univen to greater heights."

"I remain ready, passionate and dedicated towards alumni matters," said the newly elected Chairperson of the chapter, Collins Thagalu Thovhakale.

"Be prepared to work hard without any material or personal benefits. Be willing to serve with pride, dedication and passion," he said.

"We should remain focused to build the dreams of future generations," said outgoing chairperson and former SRC President, Makonde Mutshinya.

"This is an institution that will ensure a brighter future for our children and our country. Do not take politics as a career and tenders as employment - take education as a key to a brighter future."

"Univen has steadily and in accordance with ministerial targets grown its enrolment from 115 in 1982 to 15 000 in 2017. We wish to take 3 660 first-time entering undergraduate students by 2019," said the Registrar, Prof Edward Nesamvuni.

"The student pass rate at undergraduate level is 83 percent with a decline in dropout rate. The National Research Foundation-rated researchers have increased between 2009 and 2016 to 23, while research publications have increased to 15th in South Africa.

"While we commend sponsors such as parents, alumni, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, departmental and private sector bursaries and government subsidies, at present about 20 percent of students are without funding. This needs urgent attention.

"Further your postgraduate studies and help Univen to publish more articles to increase international recognition."

"Always remember that you are Univen alumni members and assist the university to achieve its goals," said former SRC President and the Premier of Limpopo representative to the Univen Council, Evans Selomo.



"Take Univen to greater heights" – Maswanganyi.



"Work hard without material or personal benefits" – Thovhakale.



"Remain focused to build the dreams of future generations" – Mutshinya.



"Univen to take 3 660 first-time entering undergraduate students by 2019" – Nesamvuni.



"Assist Univen to achieve its goals" – Selomo.



The newly elected Polokwane Alumni Chapter Committee with Minister Maswanganyi fourth from left..

## Amplifying Community Voices assists learners

Members of the Amplifying Community Voices Students Association recently visited various schools in the Vhembe District to facilitate career guidance. The schools included the secondary school at Ha-Muraga under the leadership of Mr Mandiwana, the Madadzhe Secondary School at Tshikonelo under the leadership of Mr Ndou and

the Alfred Nngwedzeni Secondary School also at Tshikonelo under the leadership of Mrs Sithuga. Amplifying Community Voices teams provided career guidance and strategies for passing exams, showcased programmes and courses at Univen, explained how to apply for financial aid and also procedures which apply, from application for

admission to student registration. The purpose was to equip learners with the relevant information they need as they prepare for tertiary education. Learner feedback indicated that the career guidance was helpful. It was better than going to various universities where they only get a glimpse of the university and not helpful information.



Spreading the Amplifying Community Voices message.



Career guidance is the key to sound tertiary education.



"Learn how to pass exams" – Suzan Matiku.



# Decolonise modern culture - Heritage Ambassador

“There is a need to promote cultural activities and heritage so that our tradition and culture can flourish,” said the South African Heritage Ambassador, Tando Songwevu.

Speaking at the recent Univen Vatsonga and Vhavenda cultural heritage symposium of the Univen Institute for Rural Development and Murongwe Enrichment Projects, Songwevu said people should form part of history and heritage in the discourse of decoloniality. “We continue to try to decolonise the modern culture that is making our history fade away.”

Themed ‘A peak at our rich Vatsonga and Vhavenda heritage’, the symposium was attended by, among others, eight students from the Michigan State University and their faculty advisor, Dr Joy Coates.

This visit was part of their research tour to enhance understanding of the Vhavenda and Vatsonga cultures. Participants also included traditional leaders and indigenous knowledge holders from the Njhakanjhaka and Davhana traditional authority areas and some operating in Makwarela and Thohoyandou, postgraduate students and Univen staff members.

“We must become the embodiment of democratic values and be the symbolic code for the total liberation for all negative perceptions about who we are,” said Songwevu.

“African unity is what the western powers fear the most as it is considered a threat to their interests in Africa. We need to continue to build cultural knowledge exchange programmes with the diaspora.

“There is a need to keep on sharing ideas to develop best practices and techniques to preserve cultural heritage, cultural awareness and cultural understanding. As the world develops and evolves it is essentially important that young scholars from the African diaspora are made aware of their African roots and issues around culture and spirituality. Let us feed the youth of today with the knowledge which we want them to take to the future. Let us bring back our black pride. Black people are the best assets in Africa,” she said.

“If we do not take action, upcoming generations might only read about their roots and culture in history books,” said Univen’s Director of the Institute for Rural Development, Prof Joseph Francis.

“We are showcasing indigenous food, music and dance, healing, customs and traditions. Do not wait

for people from abroad to organise cultural events. Today is about connecting and sharing what we have in terms of our heritage as Vatsonga and Vhavenda.”

About totems, a Univen PhD student, Pertina Nyamukondiwa, said these were still used to recognise the achievements within families or communities.

“Totems are symbols used as emblems for a certain group of people such as a family, clan, tribe or lineage. For example, it could be an emblem if you have a good harvest in a community, or have many wives.

“The taboos for a totem are that you are not allowed to marry someone if you share a totem because you are regarded as relatives, even though you are not blood relatives. Once a family identified an animal as its totem, it will be its responsibility to take care of it and make sure that they do not eat or kill it. If so, they will experience not so good news in their lives. That meant people would take care of their animals and prevent their killing. It created respect among people and social integration.”

“I have learnt so much about South African clothing, culture and indigenous foods,” said third year Bachelor of Arts in Music student at Michigan State University, Hadiya Knight.

For Florence Muthige, one of the exhibitors from Makwarela, the event provided her with an opportunity to sell her products. The homemade products she exhibited and marketed included minwenda, gwana, musisi, Venda dolls, decoration balls and beadwork.



“Respect African culture” – Songwevu.



“Preserve culture for future generations” – Francis.



“Totems create social integration” - Nyamukondiwa.



Global cultures meet - Students from Michigan State University with South African Heritage Ambassador, Tando Songwevu, second from left, Nndoweni Malala, far left, Joy Coates, Michigan State University, fifth from left, Elelwani Ramaite and Joseph Francis, extreme right.



“These events benefit everybody” - Florence Muthige.



African pots on display.



Indigenous African foods on display.



Venda indigenous dolls on display.



Rirhandzu Mabunda demonstrates the use of African calabashes.



“Does it fit?” - Hadiya Knight from Michigan State University trying on clothes showcasing African culture.

## IMPALA does internationalisation training at Univen

Univen is a partner of the Internationalisation and Modernisation Programme for Academics, Leaders and Administrators (IMPALA), which the European Union is funding with almost 1 million Euro (about R 13 million) over three years. The project is coordinated by the University of Antwerp, with four South African partner universities - the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, the University of Fort Hare, the University of Limpopo and the University of Venda.

Recently IMPALA trained 80 staff members from the four partner universities in internationalisation, among them 20 staff members from Univen.

Leadership from the four South African institutions participated in the first day of the training week. Univen was represented by its Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbat, its deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford and its Dean of Agriculture, Prof Godwin Mchau.

The trainers were experts from Europe and South Africa. From Univen, the Dean of Law, Annette Lansink, Prof Takalani Mashau of the School of Education and Dr Segun Obadire, Chief Administrative Officer in the Directorate International Relations, did the honours.

Cornelius Hagenmeier, Director: International Relations, assisted with a workshop on internationalisation strategies for academic leaders.

The project will continue with visits by delegations led by the vice chancellors of the South African institutions to European universities. A second training workshop for the staff members will follow in Thohoyandou in the second semester this year.



Participants, trainers and organisers at the training week



Welcome to Univen - Mbat.

Univen’s Cornelius Hagenmeier and Marija Mijk of the Academic Development Cooperation in Brussels share the results of a survey on internationalisation strategies at South African universities.



## We would like to hear from you!

Nendila is your communications channel. Nendila editorial committee –  
Mr Takalani Dzaga – Chief editor  
Ms Welheminah Mabogo – Coordinator  
Mr Peter Mashishi – Contributor  
Ms Mushoni Mulaudzi – Preservation (Library)  
Send your contributions to:  
Welheminah Mabogo,  
Nendila Coordinator  
University of Venda,  
Private Bag X5050,  
Thohoyandou, 0950  
Tel 015 962 8525, Fax 015 962 8494  
e-mail: welheminah.mabogo@univen.ac.za  
Office number 24, first floor  
Main administration building

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus – contact the tip-off hotline - 0800 212 755, e-mail univenhotline@tip-offs.com