



University of Venda  
Creating future leaders

## GREETING AN ICON – FAREWELL TO PROF MBATI

# “Univen remains the proud beneficiary of all Mbatl’s efforts”

**Serobi Maja – Chairperson of Council**

“With your dedication, commitment and unequalled love for Univen, you transformed this university from humble beginnings to one of the most recognised academic institutions of our beloved country.

“When you took over in 2008, the institution looked like a glorified high school with very few amenities. You have spearheaded the much needed construction of modern lecture halls, office spaces, student residences and other infrastructure projects that compete with the best in the country and on the continent. We remain the proud beneficiaries of your efforts to lift the university from the quagmire

of hopelessness into sunlit pathways of hope and fulfilment.

“The many academic and student exchange programmes that we have witnessed over the past years is testimony to your relentless efforts to make our institution not only a university of choice, but an institution that will stand ground among other universities of the world.

“As Council members we salute the role you played to ensure that Univen produces high quality graduates that will become assets and not liabilities of the country. Your name and personality will remain indelible in our minds for years to come.”



“You made Univen an institution that will stand ground among other universities of the world” - Maja.

## Among giants

For Univen, the past ten years were certainly dictated by Prof Mbatl’s will to turn the university around, to show the pessimists that a rural-based university can carve a niche in the community it finds itself in, and do this without fear of contradiction.

At the time pessimists asked the question: “When does a university cease to exist”, referring to Univen’s bleak performance. Today academic performance and student and staff pride speak for itself – Univen has written off the dire past.

How does this happen? A belief in what can be achieved, a trust in the human potential that you work with - and sheer persistence. All of this is embodied in Prof Mbatl. He never believed otherwise.

Today Univen stands its ground among its peers. The Student Representative Council is part of the university management and members attend, for example, local and international conferences and meetings alongside management. Univen was the first university to provide tablets for academic use to all students – a few dramatic developments expected at much bigger and urbanised campuses.

Univen salutes you as one of its icons – you move among giants.

**Nendila team.**

## “You made Univen the institution of choice”

**Former Chairperson of Council, Shirley Mabusela**

“You transformed the intolerable condition of Univen into the institution of choice.

“When I joined Univen, the condition was a mess. Lecture halls were too small to accommodate all students but today, it is markedly different. Regardless of the amount of pressure, you produced quality work. Today, I can proudly stand up and talk about Univen without any doubts.”

“Today, I can proudly stand up and talk about Univen without any doubts” - Mabusela



## “Your achievements have put Univen on the map”

**Executive Director: National Research Foundation, Dr Ndanduleni Nthambeleni**

“Univen experienced a remarkable increased percentage of publications, the graduation rate has improved enormously and external funding for research has improved.

“The number of National Research Fund-rated researchers has increased from two in 2009 to 26 in 2017, staff members with doctoral qualifications have increased to 40 percent, way above the national average of 32 percent and the number of PhD graduates has increased from six in 2007 to 37 in 2017.”



“The graduation rate at Univen has improved enormously” – Nthambeleni.

# “You are the epitome of a great leader”

**Former Student Representative Council President, Mashudu Nthulane**

“Through your leadership you made sure that Univen is where it is today.

“You had an open door policy to all staff members and students. You have imparted knowledge and skills to most of us. We could differ – I have learned so much from you, not only as the Vice Chancellor but also as a father.”

“Your academic excellence and collective leadership saw Univen continue to grow to greater strides.

“You are the epitome of a great leader - your influence and great leadership will forever be

engrained in me. You spent a great ten years imparting the right knowledge, skills and producing the best student leaders in the country, who fought a good fight during difficult times. We might not have always agreed with you but you were the best. Throughout your stay you were an outstanding Vice Chancellor, committed to promoting excellence in education and making sure students with disabilities are well taken care of.”

*“You had an open door policy to all” - Nthulane.*



# “You lifted Univen higher than high”

**NEHAWU Univen Chairperson: Alfred Mutoti**

“For 31 years I have been witnessing happenings at Univen, as I did witness the very first presentation by Prof Mbatlana as he assumed office. He ensured that the entire university community was present – communicating with everybody, a trademark he never failed to apply.

“Whilst I have experienced different kinds of leadership styles during my career, I have never quite experienced that of Prof Mbatlana. The highly magnative attraction makes him attract all people to support him. He truly leads by example.

“I supported his building recovery phase and he approved my supervision of the second phase. I enforced quality delivery by contractors and those buildings are still reflecting those qualities, even today.

“He brought changes to around all Univen spheres of life. Doors were always open to all. Mbatlana is a good listener, a good strategic thinker and a good

specialist of writing and presenting proposals.

“He attracted the former Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, who became a dear Univen friend, he attracted donors for funds and partnerships - a hunter who never came home empty-handed.

“The relationship between NEHAWU and Univen was at times not good, but new leaders determine the dynamics of such relationships – Mbatlana and I worked together to the benefit of Univen and the workers. NEHAWU became a whistle blower against fraud and corruption and those implicated were charged and expelled. We stood the test of time and fully realising that real leaders are principled, we will not deter from actions that benefit rightminded people.

“You lifted Univen higher than high. Your mark will remain for ever in the history of Univen.”

# “Today we are proud to boast about our institution”

**Former Student Representative Council President, Mafulo Mudau**

“When Prof Mbatlana came, this university was like an RDP house - or rather like the village of Alexandra.

“We had no proper governing system, infrastructure, and we were like lost sheep without a shepherd.

“Infrastructure like residences, classrooms, labs and offices were lacking, many departments were struggling, some not even existing. Today, we are proud to post pictures on Facebook, Twitter and other social media tools, bragging about our institution. We salute the old man for that and give him a hand of applause.

“During his term in office, he encouraged us to be leaders who provide solutions, not be part of the problem, and who also excel academically. He also fought fraud and corruption with distinction

and that led to many dismissals. Therefore, we don't want fraudsters and plagiarism masters entering via the back door. Whenever you see such tendencies or symptoms raising its head, you always acted harshly and you were never scared to take a decision, no matter how hard or painful it might be.

“Our campus has not experienced violent protests for quite some time, because of your open-door policy which allows even a ground man to feel free to come and talk to you. Even when we deadlocked, you never threatened to expel us, unlike others.

“Introducing the ‘Grow your own timber’ project, we saw how a visionary and preservative leader you are. That is why today we have former student council presidents and members with degrees. That's what leadership is.”



*“To the benefit of Univen, we worked together” - Mutoti.*



*“He encouraged us to be leaders who provide solutions, not be part of the problem” - Mudau.*

# “The most profound, visionary vice chancellor the university ever had”

**Univen Council Academic Staff representative, Malehu Maluleke**

“You were the most profound, visionary vice chancellor that the university ever had in its history.

“You came at a time when the morale of Univen staff members was very low. You reversed the then status quo, bringing huge relief and hope to the entire university. We are no longer ashamed to engage in robust debates with academics from other institutions, not only in the Southern African region but worldwide and to proudly say the name of the university.

“You brought a facelift to the University of Venda, not only in terms of its infrastructure, but also in its core business. You ensured that there is real transformation and you were at the helm of that transformation.

Through your visionary leadership, during the times of #FeesMustFall, we witnessed tranquillity and stability, when most of the South African universities were experiencing protests, accompanied by violent events.

“We saw many career focused programmes being accredited by the Council for higher Education, among those the Bachelor of Accounting Sciences Degree and the Agricultural Engineering Programme.

“Most academics and administration staff members improved their qualifications, evidenced by an overwhelming number of MA’s and PHD’s which were conferred during graduations during your tenure.

“Through your dedication and selflessness you steered the university academically, from the bottom to the top. All of this was not achieved by chance or by accident, neither through magic nor miraculously - it came about through hard work, determination and much endurance.”



“You steered Univen to rise to the top” – Maluleke.

# A decade of highlights

**“Quality and financial sustainability were critical pillars of the strategic plans. The management structure focus - lean, efficient and cost effective.”**

Peter Mbatl, November 2017

## Highlights

- All Univen programmes Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework aligned.
- Exponential growth in research outputs – from 0.12 per capita units to 0.94.
- The University's new flagship programme, the Bachelor of Accounting Sciences Degree, currently offered through the Univen/Thuthuka project, is accredited by the Council on Higher Education
- The development for degrees in Mining Engineering, Water and Environmental Engineering, Agricultural and Rural Engineering and Construction Engineering at an advanced stage.
- Future accelerated development of the para-clinical programmes Optometry, Dentistry, Emergency medicine and Physiotherapy.
- R2,3 billion investment in infrastructure from Department of Higher Education and Training, R84 million from Council controlled funds towards infrastructure projects and R300 million Development Bank of South Africa loan for student residences.
- Growth of bandwidth from 08mg/sec to 10gigs/sec.
- Roll-out of student tablets and black board.
- Implementation of on-line application and registration.
- Unqualified audits for nine successive academic years.

## A lean, efficient and cost effective management structure

Term of appointment of members of senior management changed from permanent to 5-year contracts, renewable based on performance.

Scrapping of executive deanship positions and replacing these with collegial deanship positions.

New positions created in support of the academic core project and key university operations:

- Director Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance
- Director Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning
- Director Univen Innovative Growth Company
- Director International Relations
- Director Community Engagement
- Director Institute for Rural Development
- Director Office of the Vice Chancellor

The School of postgraduate training was abolished and its activities merged with the Directorate of Research and Innovation and with the Institute for Rural Development.

## Highlights - Institutional planning and Quality Assurance

A comprehensive academic re-engineering process undertaken, including:

- Student enrolment planning (size and shape)
- Relevance and viability of programmes, which resulted in phasing out of certain programmes and rearticulation of others
- Introduction of new programmes
- Management Information System data analytics introduced
- Institutional performance reporting capability introduced

## Highlights - Communications and Marketing

- New university corporate identity – logo and descriptor, signage, branding, corporate clothing
- Revamped and improved Univen website
- New look-and-feel for Nendila Newsletter, shared with both internal and external stakeholders.
- Introduced media monitoring
- On and off campus Univen marketing digital screens
- Wall of honour for sponsors
- International student recruitment strategies with a particular focus on Southern African Development Community countries
- Enhanced alumni structures nationally
- Creation of Social Responsibility Fund
- Development of an alumni tracking system (Devman programme)
- Alumni newsletter

## Spanning a decade

**Univen Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatl**

“Never during my tenure did I doubt your indulgence whenever I needed advice and wisdom, particularly when confronted with enormous challenges.

“Thank you for giving me the opportunity to successfully complete my two tenures. I thank everybody that I worked with, especially the Chair of NEHAWU, Alfred Mutoti, who engaged robustly with management for the rights of employees.

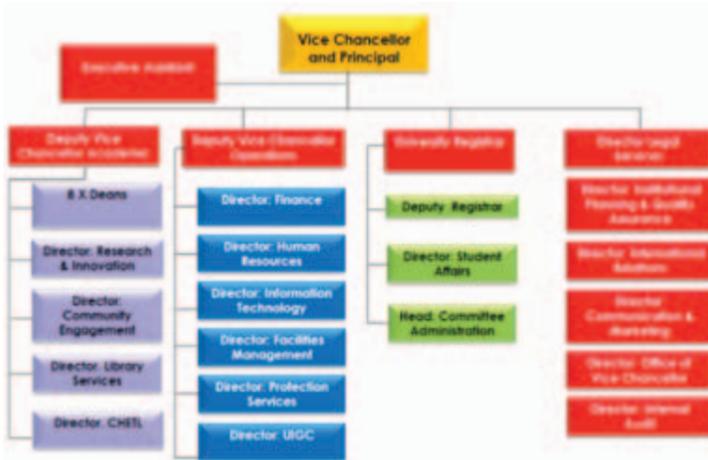
“I am looking forward to writing a book in the near future about leadership and governance of higher education institutions.”



“I never doubted your assistance” – Mbatl.

# A management structure for a forward-thinking university

A lean, efficient and cost effective management structure was the outcome of the development of three strategic plans – 2009 to 2013, 2012 to 2016 and 2016 to 2020. Quality and financial sustainability served as the two critical pillars of these strategic plans. The visible spin-off of this management structure was the will to communicate the way forward to Univen's most critical target audiences - staff and students. The on-campus digital screen is one prime example of making communications visible. Other examples include the monthly Nendila newsletter – both print and electronic - the internal communications e-mail network and discussion sessions on Univen Radio.



# Internationalisation, linkages and partnerships

A clear institutional understanding of internationalisation is entrenched in Univen's strategic plan and internationalisation policy. The process of integrating international and national dimensions into the teaching, research, community engagement and service functions of an institution of higher learning.

Internationalisation is a core pillar of Univen's transformation process to become a locally relevant and internationally competitive university. Internationally, Univen works with universities and other partners in South Africa, the Southern African Development Community region, Africa, Europe, India and North America.



# Univen extends its footprint on the African continent

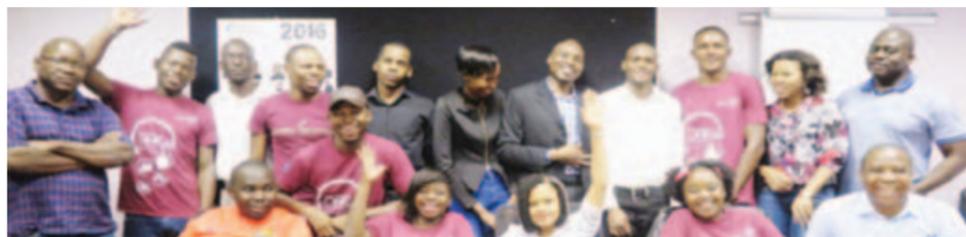
A decade of building relations beyond the borders of South Africa saw many initiatives which did and still stand Univen in good stead.



Prime examples are the Friends of Univen Forum established in Nigeria and the Univen delegation at the Regional Universities Forum for Agriculture (Ruforum) in Kampala, Uganda.



Univen's well established Directorate of International Relations is poised to enhance the university's cross-border relations for years to come.

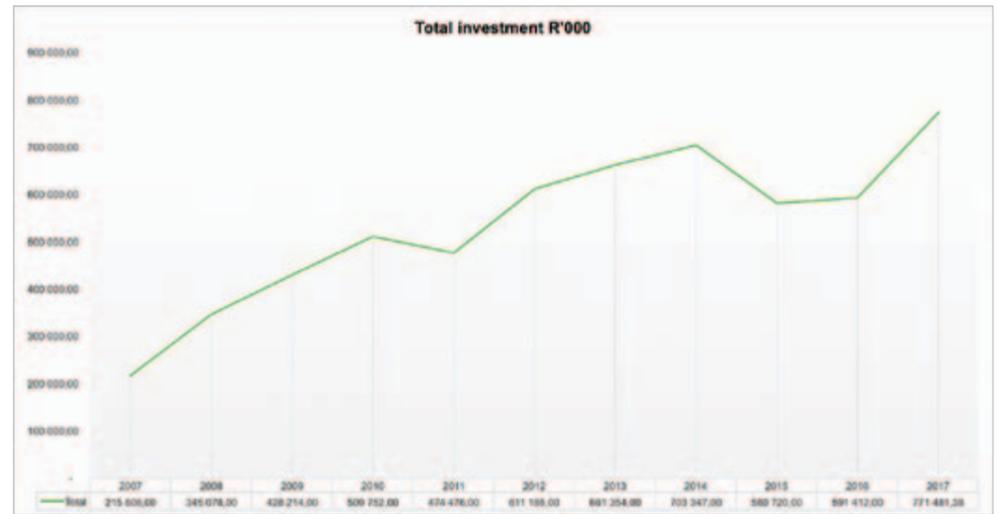


Univen's policy over a decade on internationalisation, linkages and partnerships has played a tremendous role in establishing a university for Africa in the true sense of the word.

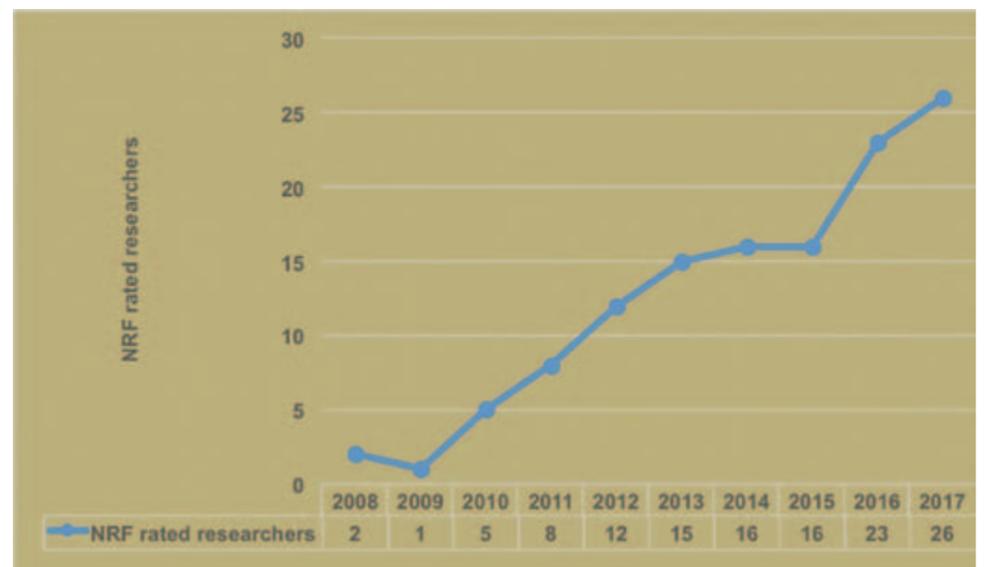
# Financial management - the cornerstone of a well-oiled institution

To survive in an increasingly difficult business environment, financial management of unquestionable ethos is paramount. This has been set in Univen's management structure – and is closely guarded.

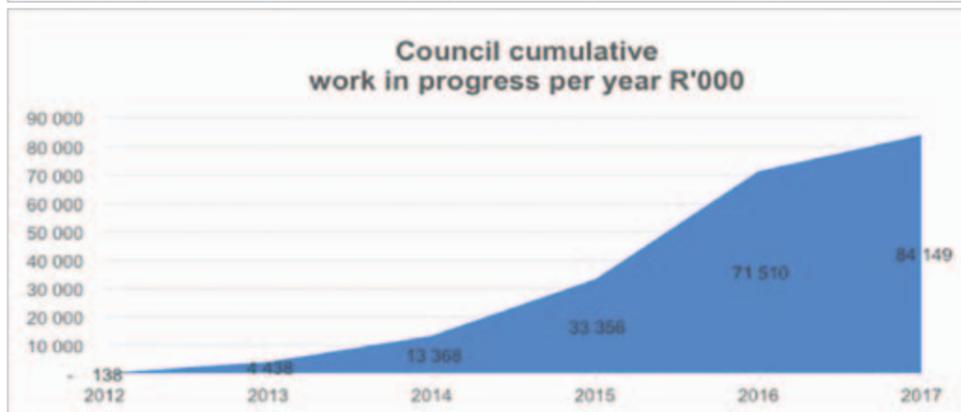
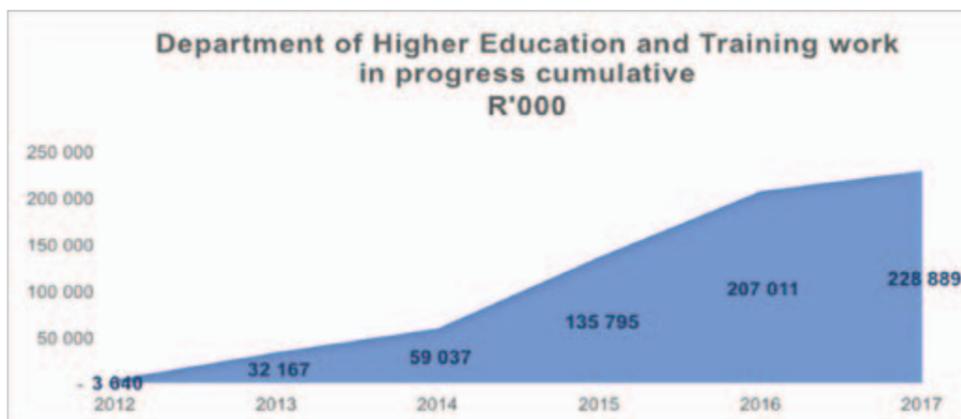
## Financial highlights



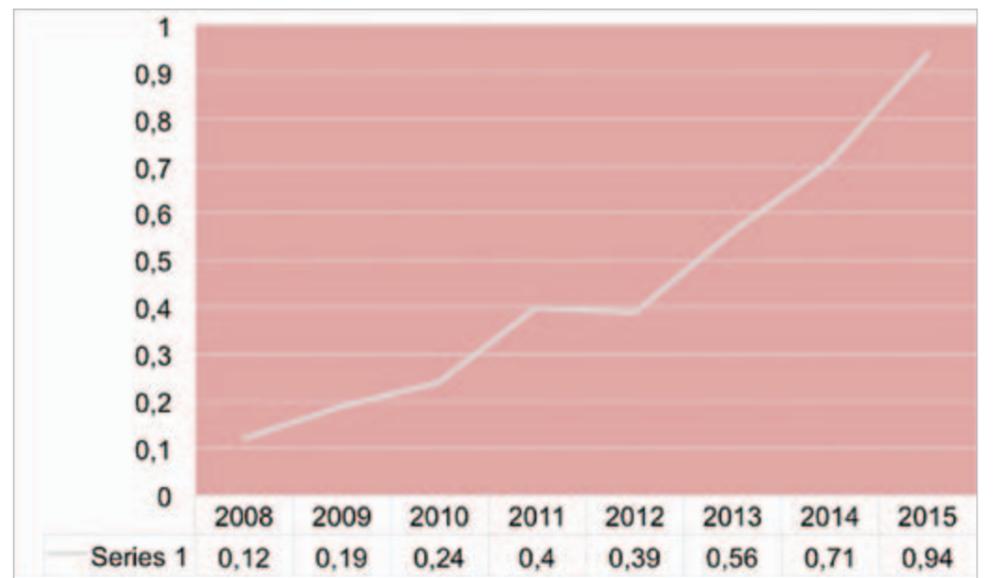
## Growth in National Research Foundation-rated researchers



## Expenditure on new infrastructure



## Growth in per capita research outputs



## SETA support to Univen for the past eight years

Name	Support to Univen over eight years
EDTP-SETA	R 11 556 000.00
NSF	R 27 000 000.00
MICT-SETA	R 9 600 000.00
Mer-SETA	R 900 000.00
LG-SETA	R 5 305 000.00
CETA-SETA	R 42 500 000.00
Services-SETA	R 30 000 000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>R130 217 000.00</b>

## Growth in special category academic appointments



# Farewell to a fond colleague

Univen colleagues bid Prof Peter Mbatl a fond farewell recently.

"Anybody can become a "boss", however, Prof Mbatl was a visionary leader," said the Dean of the School of Human and Social Sciences, Prof Mokgale Makgopa.



**"Mbatl led by persuasion, rather than coercion"** - Makgopa.

"You led by persuasion, rather than coercion. Your wisdom and leadership has shaped the Univen into what it is today. Univen is favourably counted among the top higher education institutions in South Africa."

"When the Univen community entrusted me to serve as its vice chancellor and principal, I knew that I needed to work hard with collective wisdom, for the buy-in of the Council and staff at all levels from senior management, administrative and support staff, the unions, SRC and general student populace," said Mbatl

"The introduction of decision registers allowed the university leadership to deliver on previous commitments before setting new goals. The future, though fraught with uncertainties like funding and sustainability due to factors such as inflation, global performance of the Rand and the #FeesMustFall

campaign, present exciting possibilities. Univen will need to reimagine its governance and leadership to align to the new realities. These include increased third stream income funding, new and relevant curricula that reposition it into the new status of a top ten South African university and strengthened cohesion and unity between all stakeholders," he said.



**"Prof Mbatl showed us what good leadership entails"** - Registrar, Prof Edward Nesamvuni.



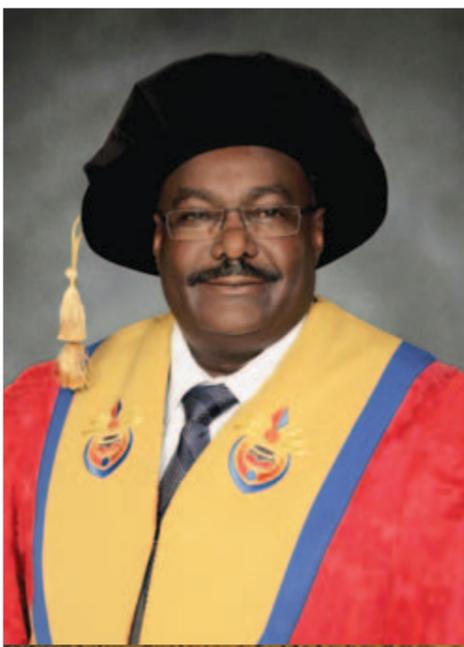
**"Prof Mbatl has internationalised Univen on both the African and global map – his legacy will speak for itself"** – Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford.



**"From all of us"** - Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations, Dr Robert Martin and Prof Peter Mbatl.



**Colleagues for ten years.**



# Actual buildings are the most visible infrastructure projects

Univen is a prime example. For the past number of years, the campus was a hive of building activity with the construction of lecture rooms, offices, administration spaces and hostels, to name just a few.

## University-funded projects

The most ambitious project was probably the new staff house, erected at a cost of R41,7 million.



the student entertainment centre to the value of R3 million,



The sports fields and ablution facilities costing R8,3 million and



Others included the reconfiguration of the existing main gate and upgrade to the value of R7,9 million,



the new swimming pool to the value of R4,9 million.



the Life Sciences Building Lab benches installation at a cost of R7,6 million,



## Government-funded projects

The biggest government-funded project was the DBSA funded student residences, concluded at a cost of R300 million.

Other projects were additional male and female student residences costing R135 million,



The new Health Sciences Building, erected at a cost of R43,1 million,



phase two of the School of Education to the value of R36,5 million,



the site establishment phase and excavations of the School of Human and Social Sciences (African Languages) at a cost of R34,4 million



and the student centre for R24,8 million.



Whilst building activity is often disruptive, the excitement that it brings must never be underestimated. This is particularly true for Univen, literally creating a feeling of a new dawn for a bruised institution.

While the euphoria of building is now over, the heritage of a functional Univen, totally in sync with developing services for the community in which it operates, will be top of mind for many years to come.

