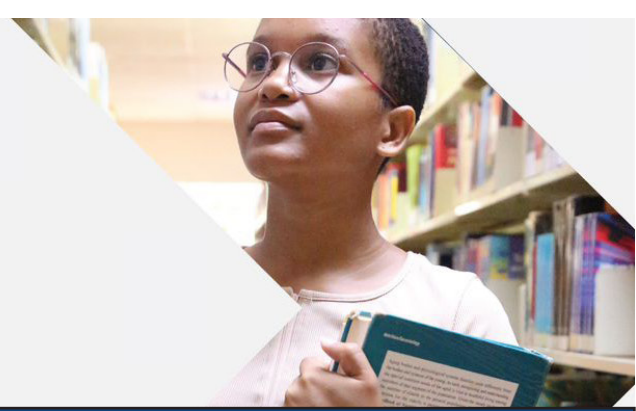




University of Venda  
Creating Future Leaders

# UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



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## Unlocking New Opportunities: UNIVEN's Graduate Reskilling and Career Empowerment Summit Prepares Future Leaders for Success

On Saturday, 16 November 2024, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) in collaboration with prominent industry stakeholders, hosted the Unemployed Graduate Reskilling and Career Empowerment Summit. This Career Empowerment Summit which took place at the University Auditorium, was organised specifically for unemployed graduates within the Vhembe District Municipality, offering them invaluable insights into high-demand sectors such as agriculture, mining, technology, and financial services. It was further organised to address the needs of graduates eager to thrive in today's competitive job hunt market. The event was full of diverse and engaging sessions about several high-demand sectors.



**On photo:** Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal at the University of Venda

In his welcome address, UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni expressed gratitude to graduates, government officials, CEO's, and local leaders, for making time to attend this summit.

He emphasised the University's commitment to aligning education with industry needs through curriculum updates and fostering entrepreneurial skills. When highlighting the establishment of the UNIVEN Centre for Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation (UCfERI), Prof Nthambeleni underscored its role in equipping students and community members with practical skills to drive innovation and self-employment. "The University's focus on creating partnerships, such as opening a community-focused office in a local mall, demonstrates its dedication to societal impact beyond campus walls," said Prof Bernard.

He also provided an overview of the University's strategic developments, including plans for satellite campuses specialising in e-commerce, agriculture, and law. Prof Nthambeleni also highlighted efforts to manage sustainable growth, improve infrastructure, and foster collaborations aimed at reskilling young people for emerging opportunities. These initiatives reflect the University's mission to be a driver of societal transformation and innovation.



**On photo:** MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Mr Tshitereke Matibe

A keynote address by the MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism Mr Tshitereke Matibe shared his personal journey of lifelong learning and professional growth, emphasising the importance of reskilling and adapting to new challenges. He highlighted his academic background in public management and ongoing doctoral studies, underscoring the value of education in addressing real-world issues. As he reflected on Limpopo's vast potential in agriculture, mining, tourism, and renewable energy, Mr Matibe encouraged for collaboration to leverage these assets effectively. He also recounted President Ramaphosa's challenge to the province, questioning what prevents its economic growth despite its abundant resources, and emphasised the need for unity and innovation to unlock Limpopo's potential.

The MEC outlined the provincial government's commitment to creating sustainable job opportunities and fostering partnerships with private investors. He acknowledged the significance of initiatives like the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone (SEZ) for energy and logistics, as well as the fertile agricultural land and tourism assets that make Limpopo unique. He stressed the importance of empowering graduates and entrepreneurs, as he called for greater investment in infrastructure, solar energy, and agro-processing to drive economic growth. As he concluded his keynote address, the MEC encouraged participants to seize available opportunities to advance their careers and contribute to the province's development.



**On photo:** Mr Nyimpini Mabunda, President and CEO for Southern Africa at General Electric and Author of Take-Charge book

When giving the overview of the day, Mr Nyimpini Mabunda, Author of Take Charge emphasised the critical need for collaboration between government, academia, and private sector leaders to address the pressing challenges of unemployment and skills gaps among graduates. He underscored the importance of programmes and platforms that upskill young professionals, equipping them with relevant capabilities for a rapidly evolving job market. Mr Mabunda emphasised the role of this summit in fostering partnerships and connecting talent with opportunities.

Mr Mabunda also stressed the potential of Limpopo's diverse economic sectors, such as mining, agriculture, tourism, and renewable energy, to drive growth and create jobs. He called for innovative approaches to harness these resources effectively while addressing systemic challenges that hinder progress. Through strategic investments and targeted interventions, he advocated for empowering young people and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset to ensure sustainable economic transformation.



**On Photo:** Graduates and Entrepreneurs during the breakaway sessions with guest speakers

The summit provided a chance for a networking and practical opportunities session, giving the graduates a chance to interact with industry leaders, potential employers, and entrepreneurial mentors.

As he concluded, Mr Nyimpi Mabunda spoke about action planning where he touched on the importance of personal accountability and strategic action. He advised graduates to focus on their unique strengths and to strive for exceptionalism rather than trying to be good at everything, as this is what sets them apart in their careers. He also stressed the need to be strategic, prioritise high-impact areas, and position themselves for future opportunities.

“Consistent delivery and excellence in execution are crucial for building trust and reputation, as people remember those who follow through on their promises.” Said Mr Nyimpini.

Additionally, he highlighted the importance of building supportive networks, taking the initiative, and showing resourcefulness, as employers value individuals who solve problems and surpass expectations. Finally, he encouraged innovation and ownership, urging individuals to “Take Charge” and create solutions rather than waiting on others. The key message was that meaningful change, both in career and life, starts with taking personal responsibility and acting decisively.



**On Photo:** Prof Takalani Mashau, Deputy Dean Research and Innovation

In his closing remarks and vote of thanks message, Prof Takalani Mashau reflected on a historical meeting between business groups

around Vhembe District, drawing parallels to the importance of diverse ventures and collaboration. He then expressed his sincere appreciation for the speakers, recognising their inspirational words that provided courage and guidance. Prof Takalani Mashau recapped the event’s key highlights through acknowledgment of Prof. Nthambeleni, on his insightful opening remarks and, commended influential contributors like Mr Nyimpini Mabunda who set the tone and other notable speakers. Emphasising the richness of their discussions, he highlighted the diverse backgrounds of the speakers, ranging from townships to villages, which brought unique and valuable perspectives to the audience.

He also praised the attendees for their enthusiasm and engagement, mentioning how the day had been exciting and enriching without a dull moment. Prof Mashau acknowledged the flawless organisation of the event.

The Unemployed Graduate Re-skilling and Career Empowerment Summit marked a significant step in addressing youth unemployment in the Vhembe district. With such an initiative, UNIVEN continues to play a pivotal role in creating future leaders equipped to navigate the challenges of the modern economy.

Attendees were left inspired and gained actionable, exclusive insights into high-demand industries that were in discussion - agriculture, mining, technology, and financial services.



## Implementing Strategy in the Face of Uncertainty: Key Insights from the University of Venda's Annual Strategic Risk Review Workshop



The University of Venda recently hosted its Annual Strategic Risk Review Workshop and Strategic Planning Session at Seasons Golf, Leisure, and Spa in Hartbeespoort, bringing together key stakeholders to reflect on the institution's challenges and opportunities. The workshop, *Implementing Strategy in the Face of Uncertainty*, emphasised the importance of proactive risk management in safeguarding the university's mission of excellence in higher education and community engagement.

In his opening remarks, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, highlighted the shifting landscape of higher education, where external factors such as educational policy changes, technological advancements, and financial constraints present ongoing risks. However, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal stressed that risk management should not be viewed solely as a defensive measure, but as an opportunity to innovate, grow, and align efforts with the university's strategic goals, particularly those outlined in its Annual Performance Plan (APP).

A central objective of the workshop was to identify and prioritise the university's key strategic risks, analyse their potential impacts, and develop actionable strategies to mitigate or manage them.



**Above Photo:** Prof Bernard Nthambeleni

Participants were encouraged to collaborate and draw on their collective expertise to ensure the university remains resilient and adaptable in an uncertain environment.

The workshop also focused on embedding a risk-conscious culture throughout the university, emphasising that risk management should be integrated into day-to-day operations and decision-making processes. This approach will enable the institution to anticipate and respond more effectively to emerging challenges, ensuring continued progress toward its long-term vision of an adaptable, forward-thinking university.

Key risks discussed during the workshop included educational policy shifts that could affect institutional operations; financial constraints -

from budget cuts and economic uncertainties; Technological advancements that require ongoing innovation; and the need for safe and inclusive environments for students and staff. Additionally, the Vice Chancellor and Principal shared insights from the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2024, highlighting five key risks relevant to South Africa, including energy disruptions, economic downturns, unemployment, state fragility, and water shortages. These global risks further underscore the need for higher education institutions to be agile and prepared for both local and international uncertainties.

At the end of his opening remarks, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal highlighted that the workshop was a pivotal opportunity for the University of Venda to reflect on its strategic risks and develop solutions to ensure its resilience and continued success. Through collaboration and effective risk management, the university is well-positioned to navigate the uncertainties ahead and continue delivering on its mission of academic excellence and community impact.

During this three-day workshop, the Strategy and Risk Directorate, led by Dr Mutshinyalo Ratombo, addressed several key topics, including the refinement of planning and reporting instruments, the development and implementation of an Institutional Risk Register, and the creation of a Performance and Improvement Plan. On the final day, Dr Ratombo provided an update on the progress of the UNIVEN 15-year long strategy.

Mr Tinyiko Sibiyi gave an overview of how strategic risks were managed in the context of implementing the strategic plan. He highlighted emerging strategic risks and outlined fraud risks. Additionally, Mr Sibiyi introduced the 2025 Risk Management Framework and Monitoring Tool, and shared insights on compiling the institutional risk register.

During the workshop, three commissions were formed to review and deliberate on various aspects of risk management. These included: reviewing current institutional risks and exposures in terms of likelihood and impact

and identifying risks along with their associated key risk indicators. Commission One, focused on the Economic Cluster, led by Dr Phillia Vukea. Commission Two, covering the Social Cluster, was led by Prof Tshilidzi Mulaudzi. Commission Three, focused on the Security Cluster, was led by Mr Ratshilumela Mulaudzi.

The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Management, Commerce, and Law, Prof. Barwa Kanyane, offered a recap of the workshop's key reflections and outcomes.

In closing the Annual Strategic Risk Review Workshop and Strategic Planning session, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal expressed gratitude to all those involved in the workshop, particularly the co-programme directors, Ms Beauty Mutheiwana and Dr Takalani Dzaga, as well as the commission chairs and Prof Barwa Kanyane for their contributions. Special recognition was given to the organising committee, led by Dr Mutshinyalo Ratombo and Mr Tinyiko Sibiyi, for their hard work in making the event possible.

The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the importance of risk management in achieving organisational goals, highlighting the workshop's success in identifying and mitigating risks, which resulted in reducing strategic risks from 16 to 10. While this was a significant achievement, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal stressed that the work is not yet complete, and ongoing monitoring and finalising the risk register remain essential.

In his closing remarks, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal thanked everyone for their commitment and urged the team to stay focused on the work ahead.



## Golfers Rally for Positive Change in Students' Lives through UNIVEN Golf Tournament

On Friday, 15 November 2024, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) hosted its highly anticipated Vice-Chancellor and Principal Summer Golf Tournament at the Blue Valley Golf Estate in Midrand. This exciting event saw over 150 participants on the greens, competing under a partially cloudy sky. The tournament provided an opportunity for friendly competition and served as a crucial fundraising effort to support financially needy students at UNIVEN.



In his address, UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Bernard Nthambeleni, emphasised the importance of collaboration in achieving the university's goals. "We believe in partnership because we know that we cannot achieve this mission without the support of our sponsors and donors," Prof Nthambeleni explained. He shared that many university students are high achievers but struggle with tuition fees. "As a university, we decided to invest in these young people. We engaged with partners who would help clear some of their debts so they can focus on their studies," he said. Prof Nthambeleni also stressed the broader goal of creating lasting change in students' lives, saying, "We do this because we believe in making difference in people's lives."

Additionally, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal highlighted that the university is also addressing food insecurity among students, ensuring that no student must go to bed hungry.

"Let us work together to bring positive change in our country," he said. "We are excited to see new partners who have come forward to support our students and we assure you that your contributions will be used responsibly and effectively."



During the prize-giving ceremony, UNIVEN's Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Botwe Kraziya, took a moment to acknowledge the vital role that golfers and sponsors play in supporting the university's mission. Mr Kraziya highlighted that many students at UNIVEN face financial hardships despite excelling academically, and he urged participants to contribute generously to help alleviate some of these challenges. "These contributions will go a long way in helping our students," he said. "We appreciate this gift and the positive impact it will have."



*Mr Dodge Sadiki when presenting the awards*

The tournament concluded with an awards ceremony where the winners of the various categories were recognised.

The team of Denash Pillay, Tendani Matshivhe, Doe Sedizi, and Chief Chapiwa claimed first place in the 4 Ball Alliance category with an impressive 105 points. The second-place team, consisting of Khathu Ramabulana, Terry Ramabulana, Mnifi Molapo, and Zukile Nomvete, earned 94 points, while third place went to Savan Maiemuthu, George Khumalo, Brian Naicker (count-out), and Selvan Govender with 92 points.

Additional accolades were given for the “Nearest to Pin” competition, with Jean Willas and David Hlabayo winning on Hole 2 and 12, respectively. The “Longest Drive” awards went to Jaco Scheepers (Hole 5) and Conrad Wezdman (Hole 13).

you are,” Dr Martin said. “Your support is vital, and we are incredibly grateful for your partnership in ensuring that our students have the resources they need to succeed.”

The success of the 2024 Vice-Chancellor and Principal Summer Golf Tournament underscored the powerful impact of community collaboration in creating positive change in students’ lives. With the continued support of donors and sponsors, UNIVEN is well-positioned to help more students achieve their academic goals and contribute to the future of South Africa.



On behalf of the sponsors, Mr David Mahlangu, Manager of Relationship Business Development and Acquisitions at Standard Bank, spoke proudly of their investment in the tournament. “As sponsors, we are proud of what we have done for our students,” Mr Mahlangu remarked. “This is our way of giving back and supporting those who need it most.”



Dr Robert Martin, UNIVEN’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Corporate Services, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to all sponsors and participants. “This tournament shows that success is possible no matter where

## Senior Leaders Bid a Fond Farewell to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Corporate Services



**Final handshake L-R: Dr Robert Martin and Prof Bernard Nthambeleni**

On Wednesday, 13 November 2024, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) hosted a farewell event in honour of Dr Robert Martin, who served as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Corporate Services from 2017 to date. The function occurred at Seasons Golf, Leisure, and Spa in Hartbeespoort.

In his farewell address, UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, described Dr Martin as a pillar of strength who has left an indelible mark on the institution. "Dr Martin's unwavering dedication and diligence in performing his duties have been exceptional," Prof Nthambeleni remarked. "Working alongside him has been a privilege. His leadership has been instrumental and transformative, particularly in navigating the complexities of the academic landscape."

Prof Nthambeleni highlighted Dr Martin's significant contributions to the strengthening of UNIVEN's Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance. "As we bid farewell, let us celebrate the legacy that Dr Martin leaves behind," he said. "We will certainly miss his leadership and presence and wish him all the best in his future endeavours. It has truly been an honour working with you, Dr Martin."

In her opening and welcome remarks, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Prof Eucebious Lekalakala-Mokgele, expressed heartfelt appreciation for Dr Martin's role in enhancing UNIVEN's standing across various levels.

"You have helped bridge gaps between faculties, directorates, and communities," she said.



"Your professionalism, wisdom, and guidance have touched each of us. We are deeply grateful for your lasting impact, and we wish you a future filled with relaxation and continued inspiration."

Prof. Lekalakala-Mokgele also extended congratulations to Dr Martin for reaching this milestone in his career.

Well-wishes also came from Prof Barwa Kanyane, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Management, Commerce, and Law, who spoke on behalf of all Executive Deans. "Dr Martin, you have played a pivotal role in transforming UNIVEN, helping us achieve remarkable progress together. Your contributions have been invaluable, and your legacy will continue to shape the university's future."

Dr Sannah Mativandlela, Director of Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance, spoke on behalf of the Directors. She described Dr Martin as a leader whose open-door policy and dedication to ensuring UNIVEN's excellence made him a pillar for the institution. "As you move on, we celebrate the legacy you've built here," Dr Mativandlela said. "Your influence will continue to inspire all of us."

Representing the University Executive Management, Chief Operating Officer Mr Botwe Kraziya expressed his gratitude for Dr Martin's mentorship and guidance since his arrival at UNIVEN. "Dr Martin helped me embrace higher education passionately and confidently," he shared. "His support and the lessons I've learned from him have been instrumental in my growth as a leader. The past four years have been an invaluable learning experience."



In his heartfelt response, Dr Robert Martin, reflected on his journey, sharing that he grew up in a township where the odds were stacked against him.

"Studying under such circumstances was difficult," he said. "But I did not allow my background or circumstances to define my future. I've always believed that with hard work and determination, anything is possible."

Dr Martin credited his success to his commitment to starting from scratch and finishing what he started, regardless of the challenges. Dr Martin's wife was in attendance. He also deeply thanked his wife's sacrifices in supporting his career and leadership journey. "I believe that if you are determined to achieve something, you will find a way to make it happen," he concluded.

The farewell event was closed with a vote of thanks by Mr Aluwani Magadani, Director of Facilities Management and Infrastructure.



**On photo:** Dr Robert Martin (middle) and his Directors L-R: Mr Aluwani Magadani, Dr Sannah Mativandlela, Dr Takalani Dzaga and Mr Ratshilumela Mulaudzi



*A group photo of attendees of Dr Martin's farewell function*



**On photo:** Dr Robert Martin and his wife