



Nendila

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NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

Univen salutes 525 graduates

A total of 525 graduates - six PhDs, 33 masters, 29 honours, 351 undergraduate degrees, 22 diploma and 83 certificate students - received degrees, diplomas and certificates at the recent spring graduation ceremony.

Officiating at the graduation ceremony, Univen's Registrar, Mr Khuliso Nematshivanani said graduating from university is a great achievement and graduating from the University of Venda is even more so.

"In some of our areas of study our graduates are the most sought after by employers. The quality of delivery of our programmes is beyond reproach. This is because we have assembled a galaxy of scholars, most of whom are internationally renowned, to deliver our academic programmes.

"Univen is a rural based university, not a rural university. We equip students with portable skills, which give them not only the technical know-how but also the technical know-why. We want our students to be innovative, to interrogate the familiar and to question assumptions. We are responsive to the development needs of the country and the region," he said.

The University was established in 1982, with 360 students. The current enrolment is 10 676. Since 1985 27 991 students have graduated - 2 276 this year.

"These graduandi are now equipped with knowledge that must be used for personal and societal development - and for the development of their families and their communities. We are

confident that we are playing a significant role in the South African higher education landscape. At Univen, we equip students with knowledge that can and must be used. We are cognisant that knowledge that cannot be and is not used is worthless. It is not knowledge, it is baggage," said Nematshivanani.

The Chairperson of the University Council, Ms Shirley Mabusela encouraged graduates to further their studies, should they not enter the work market immediately.

"The job market is difficult but we believe Univen contributes significantly by providing skills and training needed to address the challenges facing our communities in South Africa," she said.

Univen Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbaty conferred the degrees, diplomas and certificates.



"Univen contributes significantly to the work market by providing skills and training needed to address the challenges facing South African communities - Univen Council Chairperson Ms Shirley Mabusela.

Read inside

Looking for a job?	2
Legal practitioners converge at Univen	2
Protection of Information Bill - a seal to protect and cover corruption or a need to ensure state security?	2
The right of senior managers to join a trade union	2
What is the difference between disputes of rights and disputes of interest?	2
I am responsible - Univen launches HIV counseling and testing campaign	3
Univen's internet - aiming for the best	3
New R6 million disabled student unit on campus	3
Univen appoints Prof Ralushai as Professor Emeritus	4
State Information and Technology Agency pledges support for technology development in rural areas	4
Prof Taylor swings with bats	4
Livhuwani writes from Russia	4
Geologists on the move	5
Univen's art gallery the centre of heritage month celebrations	5
Breaking the ice - my first academic presentation	5
Univen law students stand their ground at moot court	5
Univen hosts Southern African Society of Education conference	6
R2,5m for bursaries - Vhembe Executive mayor	6

Dr Masipa is Limpopo Agriculturist of the Year 2010

Dr Makgoshi Masipa, Lecturer at Univen's School of Agriculture in the Department of Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences, is the Limpopo Agriculturist of the Year for 2010.

Awarded by Agricultural Writers SA North, recently, Masipa will attend the organisation's national awards ceremony in Port Elizabeth on 12 November where the national Agriculturist of the Year for 2010 will be announced.

Earlier this year she was also awarded as the Department of Science and Technology's Woman in Science for 2010.

The research for Masipa's PhD indicates her passion for agricultural matters in rural areas - An assessment of the sustainability of poverty eradication projects in rural communities - Capricorn District Municipality, Limpopo. She received her doctorate during the recent spring graduation ceremony.

Firmly believing that indigenous knowledge systems should be applied to the benefit of the community - in her case in the agricultural environment - Masipa established a project in the Botlokwa area in the Modimolle local municipality - the Molemole Indigenous Processing Cooperative. The project started with eight women and two men in 2006.

The aims of the project are the creation of self-employment opportunities, the utilisation of natural

products as indigenous wild fruits are available in abundance in the area, and training in food processing and in competitive marketing.

Furthermore, the project aims to bring about a people-centred, sustainable development process and to assist in mobilising rural development initiatives for projects in rural and peri-urban areas.

Botlokwa is an arid area with the wild fruits prickly pear and marula prevalent. Melons are also produced in the area. Initially the project made provision for producing jam from these products.

Following research, she added another product - peanut butter - as all the other fruits produced in the area are seasonal. Peanut butter could be processed throughout the year. Research on peanut butter processing came from the Agricultural Research Council.

In a mere four years, this project grew from an idea, sparked by an inquisitive mind, to a sterling agricultural community project which is locally and internationally recognised by academics and agricultural role-players alike.

As with every project she undertakes, Masipa enthuses passion - supported by a scientific mind that ensures success. Today she is recognised as an icon in the community - a truly African woman of stature.



Limpopo's Agriculturist of the Year - Univen's Dr Makgoshi Masipa (2nd left) receives her award from Bennie Bester, Commercial Manager : Seed Monsanto (left) and Dr Hans Balyamujura, General Manager, Absa AgriBusiness - Africa (right). Her daughter Rey was at her side.

Legal practitioners converge at Univen

They came from afar for the Legal Practitioner's Forum

Univen was a hive of legal activity when the Legal Practitioners' Forum met on campus recently. The Forum enables university legal practitioners to discuss individual legal issues emanating from different institutions that impact on the smooth running of the institutions.

The Forum was organised by the Legal Advisor to the principal's office and the Head of Industrial Relations.

It is also a sounding board to discuss eminent legislative and other legal developments in the field of law to update each other and debate relevant approaches to the issues. The Forum makes joint presentations as universities to government departments and parliamentary portfolio committees on issues affecting universities.

More than 28 legal practitioners from different institutions of higher learning in

South Africa attended.

They came from the North West University, the Tshwane University of Technology, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, the University of Cape Town, Wits, the University of Pretoria, the Mangosuthu University of Technology, the Vaal University of Technology, the Durban University of Technology, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Limpopo and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

Topics discussed included the Protection of Information Bill and its implications for universities, the Consumer Protection Act and implications for universities, the position of legal advisors and practitioners in a university structure, the difference between disputes of rights of interest and the right for senior managers to join a trade union.



Legal practitioners from around the country gathered on the Univen campus for the Legal Practitioners' Forum.



Protection of Information Bill - Can you imagine what would have happened to the arms deal related cases if this bill was already enacted into law? - Francis Mvundlela.



"Strikeable and arbitrable disputes do not necessarily divide into watertight compartments" - Adv Sam Negota.



"The Labour Relations Act of 1995 states that senior employees may join a trade union" - Advocate Ndivhuwo Tshisevhe.

What is the difference between disputes of rights and disputes of interest?

Disputes of rights concern the infringement, application or interpretation of existing rights, embodied in a contract of employment, collective agreement or statute," says Adv Sam Negota.

Speaking at the Forum, Negota said this embodies the right not to be unfairly dismissed from employment and the right not to be subjected to unfair labour practice.

"Strikeable and arbitrable disputes do not necessarily divide into watertight compartments. In relation to dispute resolution the Labour Relations Act contemplates the separation of disputes into those that are resolved through arbitration, those that are resolved through adjudication and those that are resolved through power play. There are disputes, in respect of which the Act provides a choice between power play, on the one hand, and arbitration on the other, as a means for their resolution, such as disputes about organisational rights.

"The fact that a strike is competent in respect of dispute does not necessarily mean that it is not arbitrable in terms of the Act. What needs to be done in each case is to examine the provisions of the Act to determine whether such a dispute is indeed not arbitrable," said Negota.

The right of senior managers to join a trade union

"This is the most frequently asked question - I am a senior manager, may I join a trade union?"

This is according to Advocate Tshisevhe, Univen's Head of Industrial Relations.

"The right of employees to join a trade union flows from one of the fundamental rights of workers - the right to associate. Full recognition is given to this right in the Labour Relations Act of 1995.

"Can employers compel senior managers not to join a trade union by means of a provision in the conditions of employment? The Act states that every worker has the right to form and join a trade union and to participate in the activities and programmes of that trade union, such as performing the duties of a shop-steward.

"The Act also gives trade union members a right to stand for election and to be eligible for appointment as an office-bearer or official and, if elected or appointed, to hold office of that trade union. The Act also prohibits an employer from preventing an employee from becoming a member of a trade union. It also precludes an employer from acting to the detriment of an employee because of past, present or anticipated membership of a trade union or participation in its activities."

Tshisevhe said employers have some difficulties in accepting these provisions.

"As a result managers holding union office are frequently being pressed to make a choice between their union allegiance and their managerial responsibilities," he said.

Protection of Information Bill - a seal to protect and cover corruption or a need to ensure state security?

"Is the Protection of Information bill a seal to protect and cover corruption and maladministration or a genuine need to promote and ensure state security?"

Posing the question at the Forum, Attorney Francis Mvundlela of Mvundlela and Associates in Thohoyandou said at face value, the Bill seems well intended and worthy of promotion into law.

"It is, however, its perceived intentions that instil fear into the minds of other sections of society that seems to be the problem. Can you imagine what would have happened to the arms deal related cases if this bill was already enacted into law?"

"Classification of information is not a new concept. It appears in the current Act the Bill seeks to repeal. In the current Act, it is not specifically clear as to who has to classify information, when such information has to be classified and what would be the yardstick to measure the extent to which such information should be classified.

"Of great concern is whether the government has reliable people to classify information. We live in a highly politicised environment wherein trust is the least virtue. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine a minister, who may as well be corrupt in the eyes of the public, being given the authority -

either personally or by delegation - to classify and declassify information.

"The greatest of likelihoods is that he/she will use his power to cover his back and those of his cronies. She/he will go to great lengths to ensure that whatever information that he knows to be dangerous to him never gets to see the light of day.

"To make matters worse, the declassification process shall also follow the same route and more so that such information shall only be declassified after a period of not less than a year. One is tempted to ask what would be the purpose of obtaining information which is more than a year old even, if it exposes possible corruption.

"A further question of concern is in exercising the authority and/or discretion to classify or declassify the information. Who is going to oversee the conduct of the classifier and what is going to be the criterion on what to declassify and not to declassify? Thus the Bill is more likely to be misused and I do not believe that it would pass constitutional scrutiny.

"Who is the state organ that the Bill refers to? The definition says that a state organ is any organ of state as defined in Section 239 of the constitution. To my mind a university is not a state organ but a state established and funded organ with its own autonomy. Therefore, it is my view that the Bill is

not applicable to universities."

Turning to the media, Mvundlela said that the media all over the world operates in a very complex environment.

"The media has to obtain information through unorthodox means and more often do not disclose their sources. It is frightful to imagine how many journalists or their sources will be arrested and convicted under this Act should it become law. As such I think that their fears have merit.

"The ongoing discussions regarding the Bill have been very interesting. The media on the one hand is acting upon its perceived fear of what information the government seeks to hide from public spectra. On the other, the government believes it has a right to protect information. One way or another, I believe that there must be some amendments to this Bill, particularly taking cognisance of the provisions of the constitution regarding access to information.

"I do not know who is the better devil, security of the state against all odds or unlimited access to information. I will not choose sides, save to note that the Society of Advocates and the Law Society of South Africa have already made submissions disagreeing with the Bill. You be the judge."

Looking for a job?

Univen's final year and post-graduate students recently gained information about job opportunities in the Department of International Relations and Co-operation.

As part of its graduate recruitment programme, the Department met with students in study fields like management sciences, law; arts and computer science and information technology.

The Department visited Univen, courtesy of the Career Development Unit.

Would they have a job for me? - the Department of International Relations and Co-operation briefed final year and post-graduate students about job opportunities.



I am responsible – Univen launches HIV counseling and testing campaign

“Show that you are responsible, get tested and know your health status. It does not matter whether the results will be positive or negative, what matters is to know your health status,” says the Dean of the Univen School of Health Sciences, Prof Base Khoza.

Officially launching the higher education AIDS programme for counselling and testing on campus recently, Khoza said Univen is well underway to implement an important objective of the programme – to introduce training about HIV and AIDS into the curricula of all departments at Univen.

“A pilot study was conducted in the first semester of 2010. The evaluation report found that with more engagement and training workshops for staff, the strategy could be adopted as a Univen model.”

Khoza said Univen received a grant of R2, 2m for the project.

“We are one of the few institutions that are administering the implementation plan and budget according to European Commission principles. Other goals of the campaign are to enhance the HIV and AIDS Unit at Univen, review the University’s policies and procedures which should be an integral part of the induction programme for newly employed staff, conduct research and training programmes and evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

“Higher Education South Africa, the contracting

authority of the project, emphasises that deliverables from the campaign should be HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support programmes. It should also lead to a behaviour change among students, staff and local communities.

“Training should be a continuous process to build and sustain capacity and all schools should ensure that their staff members are trained about basic knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Each department should have at least one HIV and AIDS peer educator who will frequently update other members on new information and developments.

“There is need to implement a comprehensive HIV and AIDS support package that includes activities such as grief and bereavement counselling, a 24-hour helpline, a workplace and employee assistance programme and anti-retroviral therapy. Orientation should be used to educate the vulnerable group 1st entering students about HIV and AIDS, pregnancy, dangers of alcohol consumption and sexual predation. Compulsory training in life skills for both staff and students is fundamental,” she said.

The President of the Student Representative Assembly, Mr Shakira Machabaphala encouraged students to know their health status.

“Condomise, have one partner or totally abstain so that you can complete your studies, remaining healthy. We fully support the campaign. Let us join hands as a university community and fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic,” said Machabaphala.



During the launch, Prof Khoza, Rev Nedohe, Prof Netshikweta and Pastor Nevhutalu were publicly tested.

Univen’s internet - aiming for the best

“Univen’s internet system is being upgraded with a state-of-the-art Siemens module circuit with a channel capacity of 155.5 megabits per second,” says Mr Joel Vele, Univen’s Director of Information Technology Services.

“This system carries internet traffic at a speed 20 times faster than that of the existing channels. The optic fibre link to the Telkom backbone has also been established. Furthermore, we are acquiring a router that can support this equipment to go live.

“Before this upgrade the University was connected to the internet with four circuits, each with a channel capacity of two megabits per second. This provided a total bandwidth of eight megabits per second, the highest capacity that Telkom could offer around Thohoyandou during the upgrade in 2009. This bandwidth was obviously not enough for staff and student web browsing and downloading activities, especially during working hours.

“The slow response of the internet is an external network problem. Our own internal network backbone is 10 gigabits per second which is more than enough to carry multiplex data, voice and video.

“Our geographical location makes it impossible to connect to the South African National Research Network backbone - a high-speed network dedicated to research traffic, research networking and broadband infrastructures. This network backbone connects a few South African universities in metropolitan areas. However, plans are underway to connect other universities, like Univen, to this backbone.”

Vele says like all other universities, Univen is also connected to the SEACOM cable.

“This cable provides affordable broadband connectivity with a capacity of 1.28 tera bytes per second. But with the university’s slow link, this setup does not solve the problem.

“We have noted that some of our internet users download movies, music - mp3 and the likes - and access websites that do not necessarily support the University’s business. With the current amount of bandwidth this practice contributes to the slowness of our internet link.

“We trust that by installing this new technology much of our frustrations during internet access would be solved. The University’s management is fully supporting the project, emphasising its strategic importance. We call on your patience while we are busy with this value-adding project,” says Vele.



Connecting all wires to upgrade Univen’s internet service.

Univen and Masia Development Trust partner to benefit community

The University of Venda and the Masia Development Trust recently reflected on the memorandum of understanding to drive people-led community development that the two parties signed in September last year.

All parties were impressed by what had been achieved and were unanimous in their assessment that indeed, the memorandum was not gathering dust.

Univen’s Centre for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation is spearheading the implementation of the memorandum.

A delegation of the Trust, led by Thovhele Vho Nthumeni Masia, visited Univen to access progress.

The Director of the Centre, Prof Joseph Francis said they are working with local leaders in Ha-Masia and had facilitated a community development plan.

“The development plan will be presented to the University community and it will be marketed to secure implementation resources; He said.



Memorandum of understanding not gathering dust - Front left, Mr Livhuwani Matsila, Thovhele Vho Nthumeni Masia, Prof Peter Mbatlana and Fhedzisani Pandelani.

Back left - Dr Moses Marenja, Mr Murendeni Masia, Mr Tawanda Chitapa, Mr Takalani Dzaga and Prof Joseph Francis

New R6 million disabled student unit on campus

The Univen campus boasts a brand new disabled student unit.

The R6 million unit was officially opened by the chairperson of the University of Venda Council, Ms Shirley Mabusela recently.

“The University recognises students living with disabilities as they bring unique qualities, competencies and skills to the institution, which serve to enrich and add value to our endeavours,” says Dr Catherine Selepe, Head of the Centre for Student Counselling, Social and Academic Development.

“The South African constitution, government policy documents and various pieces of new legislation make it clear that discrimination on the basis of disability violates the right to equality. In addition, educational institutions and employers are required to take active steps to address the disadvantages suffered in the past by people with disabilities.”

government to build the unit. The University, therefore, has the right to demand, among others, improved throughput and graduation rates for students with disabilities,” says Selepe.

Selepe commended the support from the Vice-Chancellor and his team in expediting the construction of the building.

The unit was established in 2001 with 45 students and now has 141 students with two full-time staff members.

“The University’s leadership assisted greatly to ensure that funds were made available from the

It boasts a customer help desk, boardroom, toilets, kitchen, resource centre, adapted technology lab and a test and exam laboratory. The unit resorts under the Centre for Higher Education, Teaching and Learning.



Prof Peter Mbatlana (left), full of joy while Ms Shirley Mabusela is cutting the ribbon.



Disabled Student Unit.

Univen appoints Prof Ralushai as Professor Emeritus

Prof Ralushai has been appointed as Professor Emeritus in Univen's School of Human and Social Sciences.

University Registrar, Mr Khuliso Nematshivhanani says Ralushai will serve as a resource person for the School as he has a rare kind of scholarship.

"His studies and scholastic work are of a multi-disciplinary nature, and all departments will benefit

from his presence. He has gained valuable insight from his multitude of studies he has done about, for example, ritual murders, witchcraft, chieftainship, anthropology and indigenous African religion."

Nematshivhanani says the professor will assist staff to generate publishable papers, while he will be able to transcribe and translate the vast work that he has done and publish these.

"He has served on several commissions of inquiry and if he publishes under the University's name, the benefits will be to Univen.

"Ralushai will also supervise a PhD student with a bursary from the Ford Foundation – he raised the funds himself and will supervise the student who is doing research about Mapungubwe.

"Ralushai is frequently invited to present at other universities and we should also benefit from his vast knowledge. His wide knowledge of indigenous knowledge systems will be of great help in the development of modules for the BA Indigenous Knowledge Systems degree," says Nematshivhanani.



Prof Taylor swings with bats

"There is vitality and precision to the text that clearly reflects their intimate knowledge of these animals in the field and their detailed studies of specimens in museums around the world," says internationally acclaimed bat biologist, Dr Steven Goodman about the book 'Bats of Southern and Central Africa'.

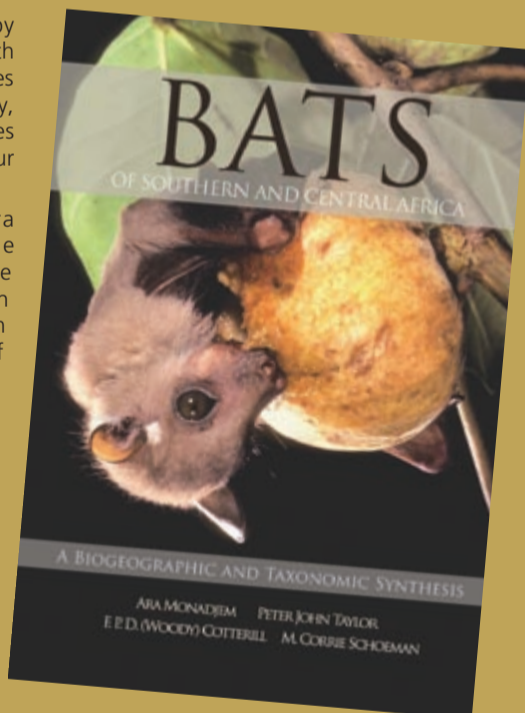
The book is co-authored by Univen School of Environmental Sciences' Professor Peter Taylor.

The full-colour, 596-page book, published by Wits University Press with support from the South African National Biodiversity Institute, includes chapters on the evolution, biogeography, ecology and echolocation of bats. It provides accounts for the 116 bat species known to occur in southern and central Africa.

The other authors include Professor Ara Monadjem, Associate Professor of the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Swaziland, Dr Woody Cotterill, an ERANDA Research Fellow at the Africa Earth Observatory Network and Department of Geological Sciences at the University of Cape Town and Dr Corrie Schoeman, a Lecturer at the School of Biological and Conservation Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban.

Apart from 87 scientific publications in journals, this is Taylor's third scientific book on mammals and bats specifically. He moved to Univen in February - from the Durban Natural Science Museum where he worked for 21 years - continuing his research on bats, rodents and other mammals.

Taylor is supervising several 4th year and MSc students in the Ecology and Resource Management Department. Recent research projects involve topical aspects such as the potential impacts of climate change on bat conservation and distribution and the important role played by bats as biocontrol agents of pest insects in agro-ecosystems.



All you need to know about bats, all in one book - authors of Bats in Southern and Central Africa.

SITA pledges support for technology development in rural areas

"The technology sector, particularly big business, should contribute meaningfully to transfer skills in the technology industries," says Chief Executive Officer of the State Information and Technology Agency (SITA), Ms Nontobeko Ntsinde.

The Agency and a delegation of Univen, led by Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlali, met recently to discuss cooperation.

"I commend Univen for the work done to address the challenges of higher education and training, particularly in rural areas. Be assured of our support to assist you in this task," said Ntsinde.

The meeting identified various areas of partnerships. An academic centre of excellence could offer comprehensive technological training to people in rural areas, thereby preparing students to enter the high tech work environment.

E-learning via innovative technologies and online learning models could transform the way individuals and organisations conduct business,

share knowledge and access information. The University can play an important role because of the existing infrastructure to roll out programmes to benefit rural communities.

These include tracking systems for the Departments of Education, Agriculture, Home Affairs and other state entities.

The Univen Community Engagement Directorate could play a pivotal role in strengthening the capacity, particularly in rural communities, particularly in respect of Thusong centres, established by government in 1999 to integrate government services into primary rural communities.

Other areas of partnerships include a research chair in information communication technology and the accreditation of Univen to roll out some of the Agency's programmes.

The Agency will soon visit the Univen campus to formalise the agreement.



Joining hands to transfer skills in the technology industries - from left Univen's Director of Information and Technology Services, Mr Joel Vele, the State Information and Technology Agency's Ms Nontobeko Ntsinde, Prof Peter Mbatlali and Prof Armstrong Kadyamatimba.

Livhuwani writes from Russia

Ms Livhuwani Mudau, final year BSc student majoring in Chemistry, who won entry to the 2010 South African Students Summer Practice in Dubna, Russia in September, wrote to us. To be allowed, she entered a recycling project that recycles glass, plastics and containers in the Vhembe district.

"It was difficult to communicate, particularly when shopping, as most people don't speak English – we used calculators to ask the price of goods! About 98 percent of food labels are written in Russian.

"It was easy to buy pork instead of beef. Although I don't eat pork, I did so because I did not know that it was pork and it did not smell like South African pork.

"I love porridge, but there was no maize meal, so we ate rice and spaghetti.

"We ended up learning parts of their language like 'kavash delar', which means 'how are you' and 'priviet' which means hello.

"Russia is a good country full of scientists. They use cars and bicycles as their daily transport - we

even rode a bicycle of our supervisor, Prof Marina Frontasyeva.

"There are no mountains, but there are tall trees all over and wide rivers. September is autumn and not so cold with temperatures around 15 to 27 degrees Celsius. There are very few black people in Russia!

"I would love to go back again to further my studies in neutron activation analysis and come back to help South Africans, particularly in the fight against toxic element in our environment, using international techniques," says Mudau.

The recycling project that won her the entry into the summer school involves 32 unemployed community members and they have already collected 30 tons of glass, 15 tons of plastics and 12 tons of cans.

The South African Student Summer Practice is an annual summer school event that exposes South African students to international research.

Mudau has been accepted to complete an MSC diploma in Dubna next year.

Geologists on the move

Tshepo Masilo, student at the School of Environmental Sciences

Students from the Department of Mining and Environmental took to the field to map some of South Africa's geological history recently.

Some mapped the Tshipise sandstone formation while others mapped the portion of the Barberton greenstone belt in Mpumalanga.

Geological field mapping is an essential part of geology as it provides physical understanding of rocks - their setting, structure as well as the environment in which they are located. An understanding of the types of rocks in a particular area is essential to indicate the economic minerals like gold and magnesite in that area.

Apart from mapping, students visited the legendary Sheba, Lily and Agnes Mines – all gold mines - as well as the Folovhodwe Magnesite Mine and the Tshikondeni Coal Mine.

They also visited the Barberton Museum to study the history of mining in the Barberton area and viewed the Domboni area, one of the most preserved areas of ancient geologic processes and structural deformations.

The field work was very successful and two detailed geological maps were produced – certainly a great practical boost to academic studies.



It's all about structure – Prof Ogola explains the structural geology of Domboni near Tshipise.



Ready for the decent – into the Tshikondeni mine.

Univen's art gallery the centre of heritage month celebrations

September saw the Univen art gallery bursting at its seams to accommodate all the activities of Heritage Month.

The week long activities included the indigenous dance competition finals, exhibitions of Vhavenda, Vatsonga, Basotho ba Leboa and Mandebele paintings, artifacts, indigenous clothing, pottery and bead work and tours of Vhembe.

The University's Indigenous Music and Oral History project was mandated by the Department of National Arts and Culture to

collect, document, preserve and promote the indigenous cultural heritage of Limpopo. The project also empowers students and the broader community, creates accessibility to this heritage and encourages dialogue through oral history.

This year Univen partnered with the Vhembe Municipality, Limpopo Tourism, the Limpopo Department of Arts, Culture and Sports, further education and training colleges, Phalaphala FM, business, and other stakeholders in Vhembe to present the celebrations.

Breaking the ice – my first academic presentation

Butho Ndhlovu, 4th year BA Youth in Development student

I presented my first-ever paper at the 3rd Education Research Colloquium at the University of the Free State recently. No doubt this is a milestone which many undergraduates can only dream of.

My paper, co-authored with Prof Francis, Director of the Centre for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation and Ms Munasirei-Muchemwa, a masters student in rural development at the Centre. - was titled 'Community participation in basic service provision viewed through the lenses of villagers in post-conflict Chimanimani District of eastern Zimbabwe'.

I was really scared and firmly believed that I would become a mass of jelly after taking to the stage. I wondered whether I had the ability to present anything worthwhile of the attention of numerous respected professionals and academics in attendance.

To my astonishment I pulled through unscathed. I realised that one did not need a PhD to present at gatherings of this nature.

The entire event was a learning curve for me and it left an indelible mark on me. Notwithstanding the fact that there were many long standing academics presenting, I was just awestruck by the number of young women and men holding high postgraduate qualifications.

I always associated the academia with the serious, old grey-suit types, but I realised that there was nothing surreal with being an academic. It is, after

all, just a profession which needs hard work and dedication. The highlight of the event, for me was, when I got to speak to Prof Jonathan Jansen, the Vice-Chancellor and Rector of the University of the Free State. We got to talk about the column which he pens for the Times newspaper.

I was shocked by his humility, openness and the fact that I can actually engage in a reasonable conversation with a person as high in the education echelons as him and stand my ground.

I hesitated a bit before I approached him but I could not resist the urge to talk face-to-face to a man I have – and continue to – read about in newspapers.

I have learnt that a relatively young age and a humble background does not preclude one from being a highly qualified academic, that education is an endless pursuit which enlightens and unlocks many obstacles and that -judging from the quality of presentations by Univen representatives – Univen can stand its own in the South African academic landscape.

My participation was earned through my active involvement in the 'Amplifying community voices in Makhado Municipality' project, which the Centre for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation is implementing.

My mind is definitely made up – I will pursue studies towards a masters degree soon after completion of my current studies - why not?

Univen law students stand their ground at moot court

Discussions around polygamy, human rights violations in initiation schools and the criminalisation of HIV/AIDS were the order of the day at the 19th African Human Rights Moot Court competition recently.

It was held at the Université d' Abomey-Calavi in Cotonou, Benin in West Africa. The team - Ms Mmabatho Segodi and Mr Edmond Mujaya of the Univen School of Law - was led by Mr Hagenmeier, Coordinator of Univen's international relations office.

The competition is the largest gathering of law lecturers and students in Africa. Organised by the University of Pretoria's Human Rights Centre, in collaboration with a local host university, it is hosted in a different African country every year.

This year, 56 universities from 26 countries and three language groups took part. Univen has participated in almost all the 19 competitions held to date.

"I loved every moment of it, especially meeting the teams from different universities on the African continent," says Segodi.

"From the moment I set foot in Benin I felt welcome. Everything was well organised, starting with the shuttles at the airport and the smooth check-in at our hotels. The Beninese are as warm as their weather. It felt good to compete against the best in the continent and still stand our ground."

"The trip was an eye opener," says Mujaya.

"We learnt to think quickly and thoroughly. We even learnt a little French and Portuguese. Benin is an impressive country with stunning sceneries. "



Standing their ground in Benin - Mr Edmond Mujaya, Ms Mmabatho Segodi and Mr Hagenmeier.

We would like to hear from you!

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Univen's School of Education hosts SASE conference

Reading changes lives

Limpopo Librarian of the Year, Ms Caroline Madzhie, Univen's Ms Peggy Mudau and members of the Equal Education campaign - One School One Library One Librarian - distributed 4 000 books, a donation from the Rotary Club International, recently.

The entire community – from the Univen library and crèche, primary and secondary schools and community libraries benefitted from the donation.



Spreading the word - Ms Caroline Madzhie (centre) and volunteers of the Equal Education campaign distributing the donated books.

R2,5m for bursaries – Vhembe Executive mayor

The Vhembe District Municipality has set aside R2,m in bursaries for tertiary education.

The Executive Mayor of the Vhembe District Municipality, Dr Falaza Mdaka announced at the conference that the bursaries were to help poor students who wish to further their studies.

Speaking at the Univen Vice-Chancellor's

conference dinner, Mdaka said the municipality is committed to assist communities.

"No child should be found lingering while others are at school. We also participated in the Back to School campaign. Our collaboration with Univen is enhancing service to the community," Mdaka said.

School governing bodies should play a more assertive role - Dr Mncube

"Schools are manipulating members of school governing bodies. This is not enhancing the system," says Dr Vusi Mncube of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Speaking at the SASE conference, Mncube said parental involvement in school activities contributes to the delivery of quality teaching and learning.

"However, school governing bodies are not working effectively, because most of the parents are not educated, and they don't understand anything about education. There is not much that these members have actually done to improve the situation. Instead, they have made

schools even worse and such bodies have not improved the school's performance or quality of education.

"There is no effective governance, simply because of personality clashes. In many instances, principals will chair and the governing body chairperson is only there for issues of formality. Members should be actively involved by establishing subcommittees of school governing bodies. In this manner people will get an opportunity to chair and gain experience," he said. Next year's conference will be held at the Central University of Technology in Bloemfontein.

Univen hosts Southern African Society of Education conference

Univen played host to the 37th Southern African Society of Education (SASE) conference which was held at Forever Resorts, Tshipise outside Musina, in Limpopo in October.

Themed 'Quality teaching and learning impact on education in the Southern African region and beyond', more than 100 delegates attended the conference. Over the three days 107 abstracts were

presented – 29 from the University of Venda. A total of 22 papers were also presented. The main speakers were Dr Vusi Mncube of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Prof Simeon Maile of the University of South Africa, Dr Jacob Selesho of the Central University of Technology and Prof Vhonani Netshandama of the University of Venda.

Netshandama's presentation - Engaged scholarship: Role of Academy on Community Development - . argued that communities are of supreme importance when it comes to research activities.

"Community engagement should be seen as an integral part within the universities. Quality lies upon researchers. We should not decide on what quality is without involving the communities or stakeholders."



How did the Southern African Society for Education originate?

Way back in 1971 the Southern African Society for Education (SASE) was founded by academics in faculties of education of the first three historically black universities of the erstwhile apartheid South Africa. The founder members were the University of Fort Hare, the University of Zululand and the University of the North.

The main objective was to create an academic forum for academics in these institutions from which they could debate academic and professional issues that impacted on them and their clientele and the South African educational agenda of the time.

The number of only black universities increased in the mid-seventies with the increase in the number of homelands and further fragmentation of black people into even more closed ethnic groups. This saw the opening of universities such as the University of Transkei, the University of Bophuthatshwana, the University of Venda and the University of Qwaqwa.

The 1994 elections also ushered in a new educational dispensation that brought along a new policy for higher education. South African education

academic bodies began exploring possibilities of merging to form a unified voice for the South African education community. Talks were held with other organisations and back-to-back conferences were held to bring the organisations together to create one strong education organisation.

SASE is a non-profit organisation that offers a platform for a voice of Africa on educational matters. It is a capacity building forum where young and/or inexperienced researchers can present results of their work and get constructive feedback from both their peers and senior researchers.

Many inexperienced researchers who presented their papers at some of SASE conferences have reworked those papers into articles that have been subsequently published by accredited journals, nationally and internationally.

For senior researchers and academics SASE offers a platform for the nurturing of those under their mentorship. Some professors indeed have used this platform, co-authoring and presenting papers with their masters and doctoral students at SASE conferences.

