



Mudzielwana elected as Environmental Sciences alumni chairperson

A prominent businessman, Moudy Mudzielwana, was elected chairperson of the Univen Environmental Sciences Alumni Association recently.

Mudzielwana is also a Director of the Tshikova Environmental and Communication Consultancy, the Tshikova Graduates Academy and the Tshikova Green and Climate Change Advocates.

"Lack of financial support does not mean that you cannot start a business, it's all about understanding what you need to do and achieve," said Mudzielwana at the launch of the association.

"We shall fundraise and provide support for the needy and academically deserving students, including offering work-integrated



learning programmes. Alumni should play a critical role in curriculum transformation of the university. Graduates must use their skills to start their own businesses - be job creators and not job seekers."

Other speakers included a specialist in waste management at SALGA, Balanganani Nengovhela, who spoke about moving towards green sustainability in development, the Director of Divhani Consulting, Charles Mathoma, who made a presentation on reclaiming the role of environmental inputs towards development and a lecturer in Mining and Geology at Univen, Makhado Nengovhela, who focused on the role of alumni in advancing work-integrated learning for the School of Environmental Sciences students.

Univen's Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations, Dr Jannie Zaaiman, the Dean of the school, Prof John Odiyo, the Director Communications and Marketing, Takalani Dzaga, the President and Deputy President of Convocation, Levy Ndou and Shumani Ravhuanzwo also attended the meeting.

In a panel discussion, attendees interacted with young and prominent alumni - most of whom own businesses and occupy key positions in government and parastatals.

"Understand what you need to do and achieve" - Mudzielwana.



A new exco for the Environmental Sciences Alumni - front from left - Ndivhuwo Maponya, treasurer, Rabelani Mabogo, deputy secretary, Khensani Hlatshwayo, secretary, Moudy Mudzielwana, chairperson and Dr Eric Musekene, deputy chairperson. Back from left - Thendo Nethengwe, Dr Virginia Mudau, Humphrey Mathata, Tshinanne Mutshatshi and Balanganani Nengovhela.

Khathu Razwiedani speaks for Limpopo

Khathutshelo Razwiedani has been appointed as the spokesperson of the Member of the Executive Council for the Department of Co-operative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs in Limpopo.

He will coordinate communications in the office of the MEC, including media releases, handling media queries and interviews, research, briefing notes, updating the diary of



the MEC and speech writing.

"I meet different people, including the print and electronic media almost every day, and research and read widely to update and inform the MEC on the latest information on governance, traditional leadership issues and housing," says Razwiedani.

Born into a family of educators, Razwiedani has a passion for communications and earlier in his life he studied teaching at the University of Venda.

After nine years of teaching at the Maswie Secondary School, he was appointed as Coghsta's communications officer in 2003. He was later promoted to Deputy Director of Public Relations and Events.

Growing up in the deep rural area of the Hanani village in Tshimbupfe, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, an education diploma, an honours and an educational management diploma at Univen. He went on to study at the Management College of South Africa where he obtained a diploma in Business Management and a masters of Business Administration.

He cares about the standing of Univen, his alma mater, and is currently a member of the Executive Committee of Convocation, Chairperson of the Institutional Form and a member of Council.

Dr Thomas Chauke receives the Order of Ikhamanga

Univen alumni, Dr Thomas Chauke, has been bestowed with the Order of Ikhamanga by President Zuma for his contribution to the development and promotion of Xitsonga traditional music.

"I am honoured to have received this accolade - God makes wonders in peoples' lives," says Chauke.

"I am the first Xitsonga artist and perhaps Univen alumni to receive this award. This goes to prove that Univen didn't make a mistake by honouring me with a doctoral degree in music," said Chauke.

This honour by Univen inspired him to release an album named 'Dokodela' - to further appreciate that his title has changed for the better.

Chauke started his musical career in the early sixties, using empty tins as a guitar and drums. He struggled to make a name for himself in the music industry.

"I used to go to Dube train station to play music for free and people used to love my performance. That inspired me to work even harder and make more good music."

His achievements include a merit certificate from the then Radio Tsonga and all his albums received gold, platinum and double platinum status.

Chauke is one of the well-known musicians who promote education and the culture of learning among the youth.

"I have a gift to educate, motivate and encourage people to be educated through my music, even though I am not educated myself," he said.



"I have a gift to educate, motivate and encourage people to be educated through my music" - Chauke

Hydrology students receive R500 000 worth of bursaries

An initiative of the University Registrar, Prof Edward Nesamvuni, yielded R500 000 worth of bursaries from Lepelle Northern Water to deserving hydrology students.

The framework for the organisation to fund students was developed between the Universities of Venda and Limpopo and the Office of the Premier of Limpopo.

Lepelle Northern Water is a non-profit organisation that provides water services like purification to other water service institutions. It operates 20 water treatment schemes and

five waste water works across the Capricorn, Sekhukhune, Mopani and Waterberg districts of Limpopo. Other beneficiaries include the University of Limpopo, universities of technology, artisans and graduates who need placement.

The organisation receives funding from the Energy and Water Sector Training Authority (EWSETA).

South Africa is one of the countries in Sub Saharan Africa which has experienced a decline in annual rainfall and unpredictable climate change, deepening the water crisis. Despite

these climatic challenges, the vision of Lepelle Northern Water is to provide excellent regional water and sanitation services solutions.

"Hydrology is a science that understands the complex water systems of the earth and solves water problems. The training and funding of hydrology students will serve as a catalyst to problems of water quantity, quality and availability," said Nesamvuni.

Prof Nesamvuni – Univen sponsor of the hydrology students.



Agriculture alumni elects new leadership

Mashudu Ramaleba - alumni@univen.ac.za

Prof Azwihangwisi Maiwashe has been unanimously elected as Chairperson of Univen's Agriculture Alumni Association.

Maiwashe, a general manager at the Agricultural Research Council, is rated as an established researcher and specialises in Animal Breeding and Genetics.

His career achievements include the development of breeding tools for effective and profitable livestock, now widely used by farmers in South Africa for breeding programmes.

"I am honoured to serve this organisation," said Maiwashe.

"I am fully aware that I am following in the footsteps of great leaders that our university has produced and I promise to serve the alumni membership to the best of my ability. I trust that this organisation will continue to be a source of inspiration to the general Univen alumni community," he said.

"My priority is the development and implementation of a new strategic plan that will determine our alumni's operations for the next three to five years. Such a plan will align

with the university's strategic plan to ensure coherence and relevance."

Other elected members are Prof Victor Mmbengwa, Deputy Chairperson, Maanda Rambauli, Secretary General, Alu Mafunzwaini, Deputy Secretary General, Khathu Tshipala, Treasurer, Fulufhelo Mavhandu, Deputy Treasurer, Rejoice Muavhi, Project Manager and Fulufhelo Magadani, Communications Officer.

Among the attendees were the founding chairperson, Thilivhali Nepfumbada, the outgoing chairperson, Prof Tshimangadzo Nedambale and a former Student Representative Council President, Prof Farmer Mbengwa.

The association celebrated its 10th Annual General Meeting this year. To celebrate this, a coffee table book will be produced later this year. The book will highlight achievements of the organisation, including awards to the best performing Agriculture and Environmental Sciences students, assistance to students with bursaries, study opportunities, mentorship and supervision of postgraduate students in research.



The new Agriculture alumni - Standing - from left - Fulufhelo Mavhandu, Deputy Treasurer, Rejoice Muavhi, Project Manager, Prof Norman Maiwashe, Chairperson, Alu Mafunzwaini, Deputy Secretary General and Maanda Rambauli, Secretary General. Front - from left - Khathu Tshipala, Treasurer, Prof Victor Mmbengwa, Deputy Chairperson and Fulufhelo Magadani, Communications Officer.

How do mining companies shape with social responsibility?

John Laisani presents a paper in the Philippines

Pfunzo Mashau - pfunzomashau@gmail.com

At an international conference on research in engineering and technology in the Philippines recently, a Univen PhD candidate, John Laisani, presented a paper titled 'Appraisal of corporate social responsibility of mining companies and sustainable development in Shamva community in Zimbabwe.'

He examined the role of mining companies in the sustainable development of local communities and environmental protection.

The findings revealed that mining companies are not doing enough to meet their social corporate responsibility. It was recommended that evaluation and monitoring mechanisms be put in place to ensure that communities benefit and the environment is protected.

During the conference, Laisani also visited the Mindanao State University in General Santos City, the Samar State University, the Cebu Technological University, the Quirino State University and the Cabarroguis Campus in Philippines on an academic exchange programme.

"I was honoured to be an academic ambassador of Univen in the Philippines. It was overwhelming and inspiring. It's an episode

never to be forgotten."

When asked by Univen Alumni News what led him to write the paper, Laisani said he just wanted to be adventurous and explore the impossible and the motivation from his mentors played a crucial role.

Laisani holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) obtained in 2013 and a masters of Earth Sciences in Mining and Environmental Geology. He diversified his studies to enrich his qualifications to obtain specialised skills.

"I just wanted to spread my wings. In so doing I would acquire critical skills necessary to make a positive impact both in industry and academia."

Besides his academic achievements, Laisani was the project officer in the Student Law Council from 2012-2013, Secretary General of the Zimbabwean Students on the Presidential Scholarship in 2012 and the Secretary of Information and Publicity for International Students Union in 2013.

To Laisani the sky is the limit. He is also looking forward to presenting a paper at a similar conference next year in Germany.

Joint effort leads to Social Responsibility Fund

Two years after a strategic plan to help needy students was developed, former and current Univen students joined forces to launch the Social Responsibility Fund.

Launched by Thovhele Nthumeni Masia on behalf His Majesty the King of Vhavenda, Khosi Khulu Toni Peter Mphephu Ramabulana, the event was attended by the Thohoyandou business forum, religious and church representatives, parents, alumni and the university community.

The majority of students come from poor socio-economic backgrounds and their parents cannot afford university fees. More than ten percent of first entering and returning students are unlikely to get funding this year as their applications have already been turned down on the basis of limited funds.

Moreover, there are students who are in the so called 'missing middle' who face financial hardships due to the fact that

they do not meet the National Student Financial Aid Scheme's means test. Yet they are financially strained in meeting the tuition fee obligation.

"Many students are from poor and indigent families which should be reason enough for us to contribute towards this fund," said Thovhele Masia.

"As spiritual leaders we will always support this noble cause," said Apostle Doctor Azwidowi Maxwell Masakona.

He stressed that the joint effort of 30 000 alumni, Univen staff, businesses, traditional leaders and churches in the Vhembe District alone can go a long way to address the plight of poor students. He also pledged R10 000 on behalf of the Calvary Christian Church.

The President of Convocation, Levy Ndou, called on members to contribute R100 a month for 12 months or R1 200 per year.

Top performing students receive graduation awards

Nobuhle Mhlongo

Univen recognised academic excellence by awarding prizes to 29 top performing students recently. These included school medallions and money donated by individuals, alumni and the business community.

The categories range from best student in a school, best student for a qualification and best student for a course.

Dakalo Ramufhi, the overall best student of the university, scooped many prizes, including

R28 500 prize money, a laptop, a medallion and a senate medallion.

“Murendi Building Supplies prides itself to be associated with Univen, where we have been deeply rooted ever since we started partnering with this institution,” says one of the donors, Hulisani Makhesha.

“It has been a rewarding experience to be one of the sponsors over the last five years. We welcome the opportunity to donate towards

the awards and provide mentorship training to accounting graduates who have secured permanent employment in public and private institutions.”

The sponsors were Prof Nesamvuni, Standard Bank Limpopo, UAAA Bonk Trading, Camp Bottle Store, Werda Toyota, Leach Printers and Signs, the late Chief Makwarela Ratshitanga, Timys Cab Projects, Forms Media Independent, Intellicard/Boxers Stores, Ingreenable

Pharmacy, Anton Ramaano Attorneys, Booyens du Preez and Boschhoff, Bridge Auto, the Nditsheni Tshithavhane Foundation, Murendi Properties and Building Supplies, Muofhe Graceland Lodge, Pen-It Solutions, Dr ME Makhwanya, Sabina Pharmacy, Shell Bridge Motors, AVKhom Hotel, Mathobo, Rambau and Sigogo Attorneys, Porche-Villa Hotel and Conference Centre, Munakisi Medical Centre, KC Maiwashe and Associates, Aardvark Enterprises, BB Mount Fuji and Eduloan.



Asharfi Tosifa - best student in Education.



Bore Obert – best student in Law.



Matemara McDonald Tinashe – best student in Human and Social Sciences.



Patel Naziyabanu Mohmed Salim - best student in Management Sciences.



Dakalo Ramufhi-Male - best student in Mathematical and Natural Sciences.



Takalani Makuya – best student in Health.



Maboko Thapelo Mokgale – best student in Agricultural Sciences.



Magakane Ronnie Ronald – best student in Environmental Sciences.

Observing ants in the tropics of Africa

Nkuna Noxolo and Maringa Ntinyiku

People are mostly inspired by role models to follow certain careers in life.

But for Thinandavha Caswell Munyai, hunting wild animals in the veld and gathering wild fruits made him to be more inquisitive about the natural environment and the ecosystem which later led him to study Environmental Sciences.

For his latest doctorate Munyai chose to study the smallest of animals - monitoring ants in the tropics of Africa, in the western Soutpansberg Mountains. What inspired him is that at a time of rapid global environmental change, humans should develop an understanding of the impact of the changes on ecosystems.

"For one to understand this, there is an exigent need for long-term ecosystem monitoring programmes," says Munyai.

Recently, most global ecological studies have turned their courtesy towards mountains where they get space for time substitutions that allow them to predict the future impacts of climate change. Ants are effective target organisms or taxon which is diverse, form a

large proportion of the biomass and perform diverse ecosystem services.

These include pollination, seed dispersal, nutrient recycling and are also important predators of pests. They thrive in almost every terrestrial ecosystem and are therefore widespread," says Munyai.

Munyai holds a Bachelor of Environmental Sciences, honours, Masters and PhD in Environmental Sciences from the University of Venda.

He is employed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal as a lecturer in invertebrate Biology. Between 2010-2014 he participated in various research initiatives in California, Malawi, Mozambique and Australia. In 2015, he was a teaching assistant for Ecology and Resource Management at the University of Venda.

As a lecturer, Munyai says that entomology is one of the most under studied disciplines and he spends most of his time recruiting students to further their studies and become entomologists.



"There is a need for long-term ecosystem monitoring programmes" – Munyai.

The founding father of Environmental Sciences is no more

Prof Peter Hastings Omara-Ojunga was born on 25 October 1949 in Amolatar, a village in the Northern part of Uganda. He was born to Samwiri Ojunga and Erisi Eki.

He started his primary school in Amolatar Primary school in 1957 and then attended high school at Lango College. After completing his high school he joined the Makerere University where he completed a BSc in Geography with a first class pass.

He was then appointed as a resident tutor at the Makerere University after which he was awarded a Common Wealth Scholarship to study a masters degree in Geography and a PhD in Environmental Management at University of Waterloo in Canada.

As the patriotic man that he was he returned to Uganda immediately after completing his PhD as senior lecturer in the Department of Geography at Makerere University.

He was then appointed as the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources in Uganda.

After this he returned to academia, firstly at the University of Nairobi and then at the University of Transkei and then at the

University of Venda. Here he established the School of Environmental Sciences and was appointed as Dean of the School of Environmental Sciences. Later he became the Executive Dean of Natural and Applied Science. While fulfilling these roles he was the Executive Director of Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance.

At the time of his dearth he was the Campus Principal of the Vaal University of Technology Ekurhuleni Campus.

Omara-Ojunga has mentored and supervised numerous Masters and PhD students, published a number of textbooks, articles in research journals. The most significant publication was 'Resource management in developing countries.

He made significant contributions to higher education in South Africa, acknowledged by his appointment as an executive member of the Higher Education Quality Committee.

He was a dedicated academician, a visionary leader, a mentor to many and a loving and caring husband and father.

He is survived by his wife Lydia and eight children.



Dedicated academician, visionary leader, mentor and loving and caring husband and father – Prof Omara-Ojunga.

Fighting unemployment through entrepreneurship

Ntsieni Sirwali

Poverty and the high unemployment rate in South have driven Lot Magosha, a chartered accountant, to provide professional support to small businesses, create a platform for transfer of skills among people and provide the under-privileged with a skill that they can use to earn a living for themselves.

"I see motivation everywhere," says Magosha.

"I am the kind of a person who sees something wrong and stand up to make it good – believing that I should be the change that I desire to see.

"Some of the motivations I come across are difficulties that small businesses face every day - youth that have skills but lack the mentorship to unleash these and the inability of some of our people to realise that our freedom rest in our very own hands."

At the age of 30, he is the founder and chief executive officer of the Hillcity Group and also group chief financial officer of an investment firm in Johannesburg.

Through HillCity Group he champions a weekly programme on Phalaphala FM where he engages listeners on business coaching for small businesses.

He has also adopted a number of counselees whom he mentors through tertiary studies and offer them tutorial classes. Magosha graduated with a BCom Accounting Cum-Laude at Univen before proceeding to Wits where he completed an honours degree in chartered accountancy.

"At Deloitte I found my first hands-on working experience where I audited clients such as Murray & Roberts, Nu Metro Cinemas and

PPC. I left to work in California where I audited different companies, including investment and manufacturing companies.

"I have been to San Francisco, San Jose, San Diego, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Dallas Texas. America all with a different culture to us. The people talk to anyone like they know you, they spend a fair amount of hours at work and they are very helpful.

"The youth should not wait for tomorrow - wake up and do it. Have faith, fail faster - learn faster."

Born in Mamuhoi village in Nzhelele outside Thohoyandou, Magosha attended the local Pfumbada Primary and Patrick Ramaano Secondary schools.



"I see motivation everywhere" – Magosha.