



University of Venda

APRIL 2015

Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

Tablets for all

Univen made national history in the higher education sector when Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlana, officially handed tablets to more than 13 000 students recently – an investment of R46m. The project enhances the quality of teaching and learning, empowering Univen's students to compete favourably. It also demonstrates the university's commitment to provide students with the necessary support to ensure that they realise their dreams with minimal challenges.

"Univen is a leader among tertiary institutions in providing this high end quality tablet pc-product to our students. I am confident that the tablets will translate into increased academic output in the short to medium term with increased graduation rates, success rates and research output," said Mbatlana.

"The introduction of Univen's e-learning project, managed by the Centre for Higher Education, Teaching and Learning, headed by Dr Clever Ndebele, will provide oversight on the implementation and academic relevance of this tool for quality teaching and learning.

"The successful implementation of e-learning



A first in South African education history - Univen handed 13 000 tablets to students. Vice Chancellor and Principal Prof Peter Mbatlana shared this moment in the history of South African education with Univen students.

requires among others, an excellent information and communication technology environment. For this we have developed a master plan for an ICT Smart Campus and an e-learning management system. The pilot phase for the roll out of e-learning in various schools is currently underway."

Mbatlana said there had also been an increase in bandwidth, which has grown over the years from

a mere eight mbps in 2008 to approximately 400 mbps today.

"This will grow ten-fold to approximately ten gigabits per second by the end of this year, due to a project funded by the Departments of Science and Technology and Higher Education and Training. The university has also provided Wi-Fi hot spots on campus," he said.

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Chief Nkhuliseni Mabidi leads by example

22-year old Chief Nkhuliseni Mahandana Thikhathali Nelson Mabidi is a registered third year BEDFET (Education) student at the University of Venda. He is a leader in the Mabidi village who regards education as a key to success and he also wants to lead by example.

"I am pursuing my studies towards an LLB degree so that I can rule my people with a thorough knowledge of law," he says.

He is the youngest chief who was recently installed as Chief of the Mabidi village.



Chief Nkhuliseni Mabidi views his registration status with the Director of Communications and Marketing, Takalani Dzaga.



Univen community says no to xenophobic violence

Speakers at Univen's mass meeting against xenophobia at University Freedom Square were unanimous in condemning the recent attacks against foreigners in South Africa.

Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations, Dr Jannie Zaaime, Student Representative Council Deputy President, Noxolo Mbembe, Minister of Information, Mr Abel Mateta and Univen alumnus, an employee at the European Union, Mr Brutus Malada all called on the university community to treat foreign nationals as fellow brothers and sisters.

"An African can never be called a foreigner in an African land – let's live in harmony," said Mbembe.

The Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlana and his management team, staff and students all strongly condemned the xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals.

"Given our geographical location, we have attracted many students and experienced staff members with scarce skills from African countries. We therefore owe our existence to Africa" says Mbatlana.

"We say no to xenophobic attacks on our fellow brothers and sisters from Africa. Univen shall remain a home to all Africans in pursuit of and provision of

knowledge. The university celebrates diversity and we call upon all students and staff to embrace all Africans and live with them in peace. Let us also live up to the dream of Kwame Nkrumah of Africa as 'one continent, one people and one nation' by showing tolerance, respect, love and care to fellow Africans."

Univen says no to xenophobia.





First thing First campaign launched on campus

“Physical appearance has nothing to do with HIV and AIDS,” says Unisa’s Prof Helen Mavhandu-Mudzusi.

Delivering the keynote address at the campus launch of the First thing First and TB campaign recently, Mavhandu-Mudzusi said that due to confidentiality, aspects such as non-disclosure, protection by the law, intentional spread and denial, HIV infection still increases despite all the information available.

“Stay away from myths related to HIV infection such as taking a shower after unprotected sex or sleeping with a virgin.

“Students must stay away from favours like free cash, cell phones, credit cards, cars, year marks and accommodation. An attitude of abstinence, faithfulness, circumcision and condomising pays well,” said Mavhandu-Mudzusi.

Univen’s Deputy Manager: TB, Mr Magosha, urged students and staff to take HIV testing seriously.

“The sooner you know the better. Disclose your status to people you know can support and protect you. Using drugs and alcohol increases the risk of HIV, increasing the risk to get involved in unsafe sexual activities.”

The campaign was organised by Univen Campus Health in collaboration with the Vhembe Department of Health. The event was attended by students and staff who also tested for HIV and AIDS. The Univen Saint Engenas performed at the launch.



“Stay away from myths related to HIV infection” - Mavhandu-Mudzusi.

Women academic leaders in higher education

A Doctor of Education in Education Management candidate, Ms Racheal Morake, successfully defended her thesis titled ‘Living beyond the life histories of women academic leaders in higher education in South Africa’ recently.

The specific thrust for her study is aimed at generating propositions that explain the South African context of leadership success - or lack thereof - experienced by women in top management in higher education. Her study aims to move beyond the barriers paradigm in social science scholarship through learning from these women’s experiences, as it seeks to place policy as best practice or as inhibiting the advancement of women in higher education leadership.

Morake is a senior member of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and is currently serving as head of mission administration at the South African Embassy in Italy.

Her career started as a high school teacher in 1993 and she moved through the ranks until she was appointed as head of a department at the then Medical University of Southern Africa (Medunsa), now the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. She worked in the area of academic development. She has done extensive work in the area of language for academic and specific purposes and has published in this area.

Her commitment to language education in general and foreign language education in the public sector in particular has earned her appreciation and acknowledgement from the French government as a recipient of the Order of the Academic Palms in 2012.

As a rounded educator first and a diplomat second, she has participated in the historic popularisation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. This saw the late President Nelson Mandela sign and ratify this UN instrument into law in 1995, following successful participation in the Dakar and Beijing conferences on women and development.

She has also done extensive work on girl child education. She coordinated the Africa Girls Scholarship Programme, formerly called the Education for Democracy and Development

Initiative in South Africa, initiated by former US President Bill Clinton and later President George Bush as the Africa Education Initiative. This programme was initially run only in Mpumalanga but was later expanded to other provinces such as the Eastern Cape.

As a developing leader, she believes that education especially for girls, is the first step towards opening opportunities into careers that have been historically regarded as the territory of the ‘human’ male. She is a strong believer in human rights and one of the courses she taught was on human diversity and how it impacts health care delivery.

Other than her doctoral studies, she has also evaluated a national programme for the Department of Labour sponsored by Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit, a German organisation for international technical cooperation, commissioned by the European Union.



“Explain the South African context of leadership success - or lack thereof - experienced by women in top management in higher education” – Morake.

A work station from MTN

The MTN SA Foundation’s General Manager, Kusile Mtunzi-Hairwadz and its Senior Manager: Education and Communication Angie Maloka, recently commissioned a 60-seater work station for Univen.

This is part of the Univen Foundation’s corporate relationship building, aimed at establishing relations with corporate South Africa to invest in education.

The meeting also discussed future partnerships in areas like information communications technology, education and health sciences and assistance to disabled students.

Working with corporate South Africa
- front from left Dr Clarence Tshireke, Ms Angie Maloka, Prof Peter Mbat, Ms Kusile Mtunzi-Hairwadzi and Mr Takalni Dzaga.

Back from left Mr Joel Vele, Prof Matodzi Khwashaba, Dr Jannie Zaaiman and Mr Lufuno Tshikhudo.



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University of Venda

Univen and Wits take hands to enhance teaching and learning

Wits University's Vice Chancellor, Prof Adam Habib and Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlali signed a memorandum of agreement on strategic cooperation in research and postgraduate studies, teaching and learning and community engagement recently.

"Although individual academics at these institutions are already collaborating with each other in some disciplines, this memorandum of agreement formalises and strengthens these efforts," says Habib.

"This initiative not only supports the strategic goals of Wits, Univen and the University of Limpopo, but also manifests the need for greater cooperation and collaboration between neighbouring higher education institutions, post-democracy.

"The partnership will focus on specific academic projects in the areas of engineering, health sciences, education, mathematics and social sciences. It will also include staff mentoring and capacity building, student exchanges and access to research and teaching facilities at Wits' rural campuses in Mpumalanga.

"This is an exciting project for Wits and speaks directly to our objectives of being a globally competitive and simultaneously, a locally responsive institution," said Habib.

"Univen strives to be a leading regional university with a strong service orientation to its community. This collaboration is an important initiative in not only achieving this objective, but continuing to grow our research base," says Mbatlali.

Both Habib and Mbatlali emphasised that partnerships between local universities are fundamental and one of the drivers of transformation in the higher education sector. This initiative makes more effective use of declining research and teaching resources and contributes to advancing South Africa's educational, economic and social development needs as promoted in the national development plan.

Universities and TVET colleges collaborate in student recruitment

More than 11 000 learners from the Capricorn District attended the recent career exhibition organised by the University of Limpopo and the Capricorn Technical and Vocational Education and Training College in partnership with the Career Exhibition and Information Association.

Univen, with the universities of Sefako Makgatho, Pretoria, Free State, the Tshwane University of Technology and the TVET colleges of Vhembe, Waterberg, Sekhukhune and Damelin and financial institutions such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme and Eduloan, participated in the exhibition.

Learners showed keen interest to study at Univen after learning that 'Univen is a university of choice to all those who love Maths and those who hate Maths'. This message was aimed at reassuring those without pure Maths in their curriculum that

there are programmes in the Law, Human and Social Sciences, Health and Education schools which they can follow.

"Can I really study BCur (Nursing Science) without pure Maths?", many learners asked unbelievably. Information brochures, admission and residence application forms were distributed to educators and learners to help them get more information and apply in time.



"Ke rata Univen ka pilu le moya mara batswari a ba na tsehele". These learners were encouraged to study hard and obtain three and more A symbols to qualify for a merit bursary.



What can we specialize in in the School of Agriculture?



Choosing a programme to study at Univen in 2016.



National Research Foundation comes to campus

Representatives of the National Research Foundation, including the Director: Institutional Engagement and Partnership Development, Dr Linda Mtwisha and the Director: Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence, Dr Thandi Mugwedi, recently visited Univen.

The purpose of the visit was to establish a university flagship programme.

Hosted by the Univen Director of Research and Innovation, Prof Ekosse, the Univen team included the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Crafford, the Dean of the School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences, Prof Potgieter, the Dean of the School of Management Sciences, Prof Kadyamatimba and the heads of various departments and representatives from various schools.

Mtwisha informed Univen about the establishment of a new Directorate of Research and Innovation, Support and Advancement, tasked to establish strategic partnerships with public academic and research institutions.

"The directorate will assist in improving these institutions' research and innovation capacity and capabilities to increase production of high quality research and innovation outputs and outcomes. The aim is to allow institutions to identify a flagship in an area that will afford the institution a comparative advantage over other initiatives.

The National Research Foundation will provide financial support for the flagship initiative - however, institutional commitment to the initiative is also required," said Mtwisha.

"A strategy for Univen to initiate a flagship programme will be to align the research ideas with the existing niche projects and collaboration with strategic partners like government departments, other local universities and municipalities. Furthermore, the existing foundation-supported research projects can support the flagship programme, in addition to the multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary approach.

"Due to the varieties in flagship programmes that may be initiated, they will not follow the normal timelines and processes, but will obviously be monitored and evaluated. The programme can be up to 15 years or even beyond."

Univen's research productivity, which is monitored through Thompson Reuters, was also discussed. Univen produced 414 publications in five years

- from 2010 to 2014. The number of citations was 726 with a 0.48 normalised citation impact when compared with other institutions in the same period. The total number of publications per subject comparison showed a high number of publications in Plant and Animal Science. Per subject comparison, the normalised citation impact was high in Mathematics.

Out of the 414 publications the author rankings were Prof Shateyi (12.72 percent), Prof Samie (8.19 percent), Prof Taylor (6.68 percent), Prof Bessong (6.03 percent), Prof Mammino (3.45 percent), Dr Gitari (3.23 percent) and Dr Tshisikhawe (3.23 percent).

A dedicated Univen Research and Innovation and National Research Foundation team committed to further improving research at the university.





SAICA awards best performing students

The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) and the Bankseta awarded 12 top performing students at Univen recently.

The Thuthuka bursary programme stimulates academic excellence by acknowledging and rewarding deserving students for their outstanding performance in 2014. It is a tripartite partnership agreement involving the University of Venda, SAICA and Bank-Seta. The five-year capacity building project of R64m is sponsored by BankSeta, with the University of Johannesburg as the collaborating institutional mentor. Mr Nkuna, a second year student, won most awards including being awarded as the overall winner.

Ms Chantel Mulder, Executive Director: Nation Building, Transformation and Growth at SAICA urged students to maintain the reputation and standard of BCom graduates.

“We have produced a number of African chartered accountants recently and we are not dropping our standard. Our graduates are still rated the best in the world. SAICA is the only body with the best standard in accounting and auditing in South Africa. We are working with previously disadvantaged universities such as Univen, Fort Hare and the University of Limpopo,” she said.

“We are proud of your sterling achievements - continue to work even harder,” said the BankSeta’s Ms Rozah Magamba.

“The Thuthuka programme will be spoken of directly by many people, not only as a programme for future chartered accountants, but also as a programme that inspires and builds future change makers,” said young entrepreneur Mr Simon Mtsuki.

The event was also attended by a number of local secondary school principals, teachers, academic staff and students from the Department of Accounting and Auditing, and Univen’s Student Representative Council.



The Thuthuka programme changed my life – Mtsuki.



Awards to a winner - Prof Oseifuah, Ms Chantel Mulder and top student Mr Nkuna.

First Univen Alumni News out in July

Univen’s alumni will have their own newsletter from July this year.

“How do we prove and show our success as a 32-year old institution that has produced more than 35 000 graduates? One way of doing this is to trace our alumni and publish the good work which they continue to do in business, private and public sectors.”

This is according to Mr Takalani Dzaga, Univen’s Director of Communications and Marketing and Managing Editor of Univen Alumni News.

“The naming process has been completed and Univen Alumni News will be published quarterly from July this year.

“The publication will share alumni professional updates, including new appointments and qualifications (alumni on the move), events and activities of chapters and school-based associations, research publications, student awards, community engagements and sports. Other columns will feature obituaries, donations to the Social Responsibility Fund, careers and job opportunities.

“It is in our hands - both as internal and external stakeholders - to ensure that the newsletter gains a competitive edge and support as it is about our alumni and the prestige of our institution.

“Alumni are a vital part of Univen family whose submissions, ideas, comments and thoughts will position this newsletter to become one of the best read alumni magazines in South Africa and the SADC region,” says Dzaga.

- Share alumni news at alumni@univen.ac.za.

Univen tennis team brings home two trophies

Pfuzo Mashau – 3rd year Media Studies

Univen Tennis brought home two trophies from the recent Benoni Easter Classic tournament as well as from the intervarsity sports competition.



Practicing, participating, competing and bringing home trophies – Univen Tennis flying the university’s flag.

Taking the lead to improve Univen's NRF ratings

Univen's Directorate of Research and Innovation Director, Prof Ekosse, assisted by Dr Sekhula, academics and active researchers put themselves through the paces and got evaluated through the National Research Foundation's evaluation and rating system.

Foundation-rated researchers Professors Taylor, Sewlall, Bessong, Potgieter, Samie and Dr Ndlovu shared their experience in research specialisations and how to get rated. The Schools of Health Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, Education, Human and Social Sciences and Mathematical and Natural Sciences also presented their experiences.

As part of the outcome of the briefing session, potential applicants would update their CVs on the National Research Foundation's online submission

system (<https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>), and create and complete applications for rating.

In a follow-up review meeting, Ekosse sat with potential candidates, scrutinising each application and highlighting sections that need improvement. Self-assessment of research outputs, researchers' profiles and their capability for student capacity building and the impact of research outputs on society were highlighted as critical components that applicants need to work on.

The National Research Foundation rating applications review panel with rated researchers Professors Ekosse, Sewlall, Bessong, Khoza, Potgieter, Taylor, Jideani, Garira, Maputle, Shonhai, Foord, Shateyi, Gwata, Samie and Dr Ndlovu will oversee future processes.



Prof Ekosse leading the briefing session.



of Sewlall a C2 rated researcher.



Prof Taylor a B2 rated researcher.



Potential applications put through the paces at the review meeting.

Biokinetics is an eye opener

Daphney Ligavha

When I first enrolled for BSC (Biokinetics) at Univen, little did I know that one day I would contribute to the health and fitness of our communities. Biokinetics to me is an eye-opener, with so many opportunities out there.

I was born and raised in Madombidzha village, west of Makhado town. After matriculating in 1994 at Litshovhu Senior Secondary school, I went to the Vaal University of Technology where I obtained a BAdmin degree.

I worked at the Louis Trichardt Post Office for five years. Driven by the saying 'never too old to learn', I furthered my studies at Univen and obtained a BSc honours in Biokinetics in 2007.

I was appointed at the South African Police Services where I was responsible for the health and fitness programme, the assessment of new entry level candidates, the development of a test battery for new recruits and for standardising all gymnasiums and sports-specific tests for all police athletes.

I am now with the Department of Correctional Services as an Assistant Director -Sports and Recreation, focusing on health and wellness.

Let us work together to promote good health and exercise among those with chronic diseases, the elderly and every one of us.



Univen donates 205 computers to the community

"Univen is not only expanding its infrastructure and student enrolment, but also investing in the development of the community in which it operates," says Univen's Registrar, Prof Nesamvuni.

Univen recently donated 205 computers to local schools, non-Governmental organisations and ABET level 4 graduates.

"We need to use technology to bridge the computer literacy gap of secondary school learners in preparing them for post-secondary education. Technology can no longer be taken for granted as it has become integral to our daily lives."

"Univen is always ready to engage communities and they should keep us on our toes to ensure that the relationship works," said Univen's Director of Community Engagement, Prof Netshandama.

"We have been given technology and we need to use it to benefit us," said Mr Ntsieni Alfred Mutoti on behalf of the ABET graduates.

The schools and non-governmental organisations were represented by Mr Tshimangadzo Mammburu, Univen alumnus and the principal of the Tshifhatani Primary school, who thanked Univen.

"Univen is like a sycamore fruit tree that helped the biblical Zacchaeus to see Jesus in that it will continue to give to needy schools," he said.

The primary schools that received computers are Bergvlam, Mvudi, Mamathieledzha, Murangoni, Pfukoni, Tshikhudini, Lufule, Mahuvhini, Tshifhatani and Tshandama. The secondary schools are Tshivhidzo Masiagwala, Dzwaboni, Ratshikwekwete, Fhatuwani, Hanyani, Sam Mavhina, Nthetsheseleni, Mukhwantheli, Ralson Tshinanne and Raluswielo.

Non-governmental organisations that received computers are the Davha Agricultural Development Agency, the Little Flower Learning Centre, the Mvelaphanda Youth Development Centre, the Mualusi Drop in Centre, the Victorious Community, the Nombhela Gardens and Cultural village, the Mulisawa Ndele Drop In Centre, the Lufuno Home Based Care and Drop in Centre, the Lufuno Home Based Care and Drop in Centre, the Ntwanano HIV support programme, the Litshani Vhana Vhade Foundation, the Ngudza ABET Center and the Mutshedzi Learners Youth Resource Foundation.



"Let's use technology to bridge the computer literacy gap" – Nesamvuni.



Empowering communities with technology - thankful recipients of the computers. attended the event

Focus on occupational health and safety

To revitalise the functionality of Univen's Occupational Health and Safety Committee and to strengthen the implementation of the Act and its related regulations, the unit recently hosted a strategic workshop.

On the agenda was capacity and policy issues, environmental, hazardous and integrated waste management plan discussions, waste minimisation and recycling planning and business and operational plans.

Univen established the Health and Safety Committee a few years ago with a mandate to address matters concerning compliance to OHS Act No. 181 of 1993 and its regulations. The committee is currently operational and all necessary appointments made.

Speakers included Mrs Carol Mthethwa, an occupational health and safety specialist of the Department of Labour, Mr Jacob Mpulwane, an assistant director from the same department, Mr Kobus de Bruyn, a specialist from the University of Johannesburg, Mrs Mahlodi Maphakela, an occupational health nurse from the University of Limpopo, two occupational health and safety officers, Mrs Takalani Ngobenja and Mr Lyborn Muthaphuli, respectively from the Thulamela and Vhembe District Municipalities and Mrs Nyasa Mapira, environmental, health and safety manager from SHUMANI SHE Consultancy.

The workshop produced a service provider management policy, a PEST and SWOT analysis, redefined the duties of the Occupational Health and Safety committee and its officers' duties and also redefined the implementation of awareness programmes implementation. Other resolutions include the restructuring of support services and functionality, compensation of injury on duty and studies in the context of the higher education environment.



The Univen Occupation Health and Safety Team – committed to excellence.

Univen recruits matric learners in Hasinthumule–Kutama



Get informed about Univen - Mr Takalani Thabo with eager future students.

Univen recently visited the Muduluni village in Hakutama-Sinthumule to disseminate information about the university's programmes and financial support to grade 12 learners.



Not all work – Muvhango actor and music artist Humbulani Tswerani entertained learners with fine reggae tunes.

The visited schools included the Maneledzi, Tshiungulela, Kutama Sinthumule, Sukumani Kundani, Swongozwi, Swobani, Magoni, Emmanuel Christian, Litshovhu, Mmiliage, Makhado camp and Luvhidini secondary schools.

Univen's Mr Takalani Thabo urged learners to work hard during their matric examinations to earn their space without compromise at Univen. He provided information about the application and admission procedures at Univen, the National Financial Student Aid Scheme's online application and other financial assistance. Learners also received application forms for entry into Univen.

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World-renowned agro-ecologists visit Univen

Prof Teja Tscharntke and Dr Ingo Grass of the University of Göttingen recently visited Univen, courtesy of Univen's Chair on Biodiversity Value and Change.

It is part of the German-funded Limpopo Living Landscapes project. The head of Univen's Chair, Prof Peter Taylor, leads a sub-project 'Functional biodiversity'.

Tscharntke is listed by Thomson ISI's Web of Knowledge Essential Science Indicators as among the top 20 most-cited scientists worldwide in the field of environment/ecology.

Tscharntke and Grass visited macadamia orchards in the Levubu area to help design experiments to quantify the economic value of natural pollinators and insect pest predators like bats and birds. They met some of the local macadamia growers and local agricultural consultant, Dries Alberts. With Prof Stefan Foord, Head of the Zoology Department at Univen, they discussed collaborative research on pollination services of insects in small-holder mango farms. A Univen MSc student, Mr Terrence Maphote, supervised by Foord, is currently working on this project.

Together with Taylor, Tscharntke and Grass will co-supervise two German PHD students, Ms Sina Weier and Valerie Linden, who recently registered at Univen.

Tscharntke also delivered a public lecture at Univen's School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences, on conservation in tropical agro-ecosystems: biodiversity and ecosystem services. He highlighted

the inestimable value of ecosystem services in tropical agro-ecosystems and the negative impacts of environmental degradation on global human food security.

"Linking agricultural intensification with biodiversity conservation and hunger reduction requires well-informed regional and targeted solutions, something which the land sparing vs sharing debate has failed to achieve so far," he said.



Practising research – PHD students Valerie Linden and Sina Weier with Prof Tscharntke during his recent research visit.

Hopefully the research with Tscharntke's group will not only boost research and postgraduate output at Univen, but will shed valuable insights into the value of natural ecosystem services in commercial and small-holder farming systems in the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve.

Ways to conserve biodiversity to maximise these services in the face of climate change will hopefully also be determined.

We would like to hear from you!

Nendila is your communications channel. Nendila editorial committee –

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