



University of Venda

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Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

Research must improve peoples' lives

"Research must change the lives of societies," says the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Planning Research and Innovation at Kenya's Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Prof Egara Kabaji.

In his keynote address at the recent Univen Excellence Awards, Kabaji said scientific research is not just a means to funding, but should improve the lives of people.

"Research must impact on the development of the African industry, ensuring that knowledge is improved for the continent and its people. Universities must produce great minds and creative thinkers by being robust in scientific research.

"South Africa's National Development Plan requires that by 2030 universities move away from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. However, before we do that, we need skills to be able to drive the knowledge-based economy. Universities must be serious about producing masters and doctoral students. We need to identify programmes that are critical to driving the needs of our country, the region and the continent. Univen is definitely moving towards meeting the expectations of the country," said the university's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbati.

"These awards come with an added responsibility, as the awardees have to mentor and inspire students and peers to do more research," said Univen's Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford. "Walk in the light and be inspired to walk on the stage next year."

Awards were made to recognise excellence in research, teaching and learning and community engagement.

Excellence in Research awards went to 241 active researchers.

Professors Taylor, Bessong, Jideani and Samie were awarded as the best overall researchers, the School of Human and Social Sciences as the school with the most active researchers, Prof Kutame as the supervisor with the highest number of research masters students who graduated in 2014 while the school with the highest number of research masters students who graduated was the School of Human and Social Sciences.

Prof Francis was awarded as the promoter with the highest number of doctoral students who graduated last year, while the award for the school

with the highest number of doctoral students who graduated went to the School of Agriculture.

Prof Bessong is the researcher who received the most external funds in 2014, while Profs Taylor, Shonhai, Gitari and Ekosse and Drs Tinarwo and Baloyi and Ms Nethengwe were awarded for attracting external funds exceeding R500 000. The School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences received the award for receiving the most external funds in 2014.

Prof Maputle was awarded as the researcher with the most research output in South African post-secondary education accredited journals while 26 researchers whose research publications output are equal or more than 1.25 units were awarded, most of them from the School of Health Sciences.

Awards in Community Engagement were made in seven categories.

Prof Bikam was awarded for Excellence in Engaged Teaching and Learning, Prof Francis received an award for Excellence in Community-Engaged Research and Mr Nekhubvi, Dr Tinarwo and Ms Ramaite were awarded for Excellence in Social Responsiveness Programmes and Community Partnerships.

Prof Sankaran - also the overall winner - received an award for Excellence in Outreach Programme: Public Responsibility. The school award went to the School of Environmental Sciences.

The 2014 awards for Excellence in Teaching and Learning went to Mr Munieng Mbodila in the Junior Lecturer category and to Mr Tendai Chari in the Lecturer category. Drs Ndileleni Paulinah Mudzielwana, Mwavuhova Hilda Shilubane and Jabulani Gumbo received awards in the senior lecturer category, while Profs Jacobs and Kutame were awarded in the Associate Professor category.



Excellence awards – a line up of winners.



Read inside

Rocks and soil – South Africa and Russia join forces	2
Anything is possible through team spirit	2
More than 1 000 learners at National Science Week	2
Univen to be in the top five by 2030 - Mbati	3
Young people must use their energy for empowerment	3
Role models for the youth	4
British High Commissioner on campus	4
Universities should address gender disparities - Mbeki	4
The international Year of Light	4
Univen and Absa partner to get people ready to work	5
Working together to enhance communities	5
Exposing postgraduates to the world	5
Innovative tools to access food quality and safety	5
Learning about service conditions	5
Univen peer helpers- lending a helping hand	5
Servant leadership in honour of Tata Mandela	6
Sustainable forest management – Univen participates	6
Venture into rare specialisations in law - Minister	6
New employees shown the ropes	6



"Research is not just a means to funding, but should improve the lives of people" - Kabaji.



"Univen is moving towards meeting the expectations of the country" - Mbati.

Rocks and soil – South Africa and Russia join forces

A Univen delegation led by Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbat, recently visited Russia as members of the scientific team promoting research on trends of recent transformations of landscapes based on rocks and soils data.

The visit was made under the auspices of a Russia/ South Africa Research Cooperation Programme initiated in 2013 at the International Association for the Study of Clays and Clay Minerals conference in Brazil.

The cooperation includes exchange visits, of which two have already taken place, laboratory analyses by staff and PhD students at selected universities in St Petersburg, joint publications and joint workshops, seminars and conferences.

A workshop was held at Univen last year, a seminar at St Petersburg State University this year, two field

trips took place and a paper was presented at Euroclays 2015 in Scotland.

The delegation also discussed memoranda of understanding and agreement with the St Petersburg State University, the St Petersburg Electrotechnical University and the St Petersburg Polytechnical University. It also visited several specialised laboratories and cultural places that mark the heritage of the Russian people.

A funding proposal is being developed by the St Petersburg Polytechnical University and Univen.

Other activities will include student and staff exchange visits, the use of specialised laboratories by Univen staff and students, the co-hosting of workshops, seminars and conferences, and joint publications in scientific journals.



Stop and smell the flowers - The Univen delegation at the Botanical Gardens of St Petersburg State University.



Prof Ekosse at the X-Ray Diffraction Laboratory of St Petersburg State University.



Kusnechnoe, place of summer practices - the Univen delegation explores the training ground of Landscapes Planning, Soil Science, and Geobotany of the St Petersburg State University.



Anything is possible through team spirit

MC Raletjena – 3rd year media student

It is teamwork and the eagerness to win that has brought the Univen Volleyball Club so far.

“We need to focus and coordinate in the court with our aim for one thing and one thing only - winning the league,” says coach Mabate Blessings.

“The team has the winning spirit which will enable them to reach their goal.”

The team has managed to beat the likes of the University of Limpopo, Dust and Diesel, Evergreen

and Killer Aces.

“It does not matter whether we play against a developing or an experienced, strong team. No team is small.

“All we need to do is play how we know best and win,” says the team captain, Salamina Segwapa. “Remember, our opponents also want a win.”

The team still has more games to play before the end of the season - it seems the best is yet to come!

More than 1 000 learners at National Science Week

Light and light-based technology had more than 1 000 learners from 20 secondary schools in awe at this year’s National Science Week. Organised by Univen’s Vuwani Science Resource Centre, this year’s theme was ‘The international year of light and light-based technologies’.

Activities included learners doing curriculum related experiments in optics and light, experiments giving learners the chance to experience and understand important concepts, displays of indigenous knowledge systems - particularly about medicinal plants - biotechnology displays, mini science shows and career guidance sessions.

Visitors from Warwick University in England, who are supporting schools in the neighbourhood of the

science centre, also staged activities and community engagement initiatives.

National Science Week is an annual countrywide celebration of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and innovation. It is an initiative of the Department of Science and Technology that promotes general awareness of the value of science and technology in peoples’ daily lives.

The Vuwani Science Resource Centre has been hosting Science Week for the past eight years. It popularises science for the broader South African society and showcases local innovations in science and technology to make the field more appealing to learners, leading them to make related career choices.



Opening up to science in everyday life.



Univen and University of Warwick students combine forces to bring science to communities.

Univen to be in the top five by 2030 - Mbat

“Univen is working to be one of the top five South African universities by 2030,” says Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbat. Opening the Univen strategic planning session recently, Mbat said to achieve this, average annual growth in academic staff numbers should be between 10 and 15 percent.

“To be a university of choice would also require accelerated growth in the university’s research base.

Schools are expected to have at least one research professor and one post-doctoral fellow from 2016. As part of differentiated growth in the higher education sector, the School of Agriculture will be elevated to a centre of excellence.

“A conscious decision to transform the curriculum to cater for the employability of our graduates will be pursued,” said Mbat. These remarks set the tone for the strategy meeting to compile

Univen’s strategic plan for 2016 to 2020. Mbat said the university has done considerably well in terms of graduation rates, research output and infrastructural development.

“Among others, we have developed new policies, revised old policies and cleaned up the programme and qualification mix. To succeed, not only Univen but South Africa must move towards a knowledge-based economy,” said Mbat.

The session, facilitated by the former Chief Executive Officer of the Council on Higher Education, Mr Ahmed Essop, was attended by members of senior and executive management, vice deans, operational heads of departments, unions, staff structures and student leaders.

A dedicated team crafting a winning strategy.



“By 2015 Univen should be one of the top five South African universities” - Mbat.



Young people must use their energy for empowerment

“Young people, direct your energy to positive causes.”

This was the message from Suzan Ravuku, Muvhango actress and Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme staff member, at the recent launch of the ZAZI campaign.

“Young people are the future of this country, so they must know their strength and use it positively to influence others to make South Africa a better place.

“Young people are careless with their lives. They have become victims of unprotected sex and substance abuse. They’ve lost interest in education and morality.

“It is high time we stand together to take responsibility for our future. Know your strength and HIV status, get tested. The health challenge within our generation will diminish if the power of choice that we have can be used effectively,” she said.

“Respect your bodies and yourselves and know your strength,” said the Minister of Women and Gender, Mashudu Nthulane. (of the Univen SRC??)

The annual ZAZI campaign is organised by Univen Campus Health through the HIV/AIDS unit to encourage students, school learners and staff to know their strength, particularly their health status.

The event was attended by learners from various secondary schools, Thohoyandou Correctional Service and officials of the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme. The audience was entertained by edu-taining presentations, Univen Drama and the Malende traditional dance group.



“Young people are the future of this country” – Ravuku.



Role models for the youth

Mulovhedzi Murendeni Comfort – 4th year BSc student, Food Science and Technology

I was among a number of professionals approached to act as a role model in my field of study for learners and the public during Science Week. I was stationed in the Burgersfort Sekhukhune district in Limpopo as a member of a team of eight from different fields of science.

The community was taught about astronomy by letting them view the night sky, using a telescope.

We visited eight secondary schools in Burgersfort - the Batau, Mohlarutse, Lehlaba, Mogolo, Mmditsi, Phaahla, Kweledi and Lehlabile High Schools - informing 5 000 learners about the international year of light and light based technologies.

Learners conducting experiments of bouncing and bending of light.



British High Commissioner on campus

The British High Commissioner to South Africa, Judith Macgregor, visited Univen recently. Accompanied by Patrick Dunne, a member of the Council of the University of Warwick in England, she highlighted the various educational opportunities afforded to South Africans by the British Government.

Macgregor also viewed the Warwick in Africa project, a community engagement project that supports basic education in the Vhembe District. It is implemented by the University of Warwick in collaboration with Univen. She was also introduced to some of the schools where Univen supports basic education support through grants from the British High Commission.

The MEC for the Limpopo Department of Education, Ishmael Kgetjepe and members of the Limpopo and Vhembe District Department of Education also attended the meeting.

Walking the Univen campus - British High Commissioner Judith Macgregor (back centre) with University of Warwick, Univen and community team members.



Universities should address gender disparities - Mbeki



"Institutions of higher learning should take the lead in addressing gender issues" - Mbeki

"Women still only occupy about 28 percent of senior positions. Universities should address this," says former President Thabo Mbeki.

Speaking at the 'Gender mainstreaming and representation at the workplace symposium' held on the Univen campus recently, Mbeki said the underrepresentation of women in higher academic ranks and overrepresentation in lower ranks should be addressed.

"Institutions of higher learning should take the lead in addressing these gender issues. Transformation of such institutions should be top of the agenda.

"Universities should look at their staff in its entirety, not merely as individuals. Professional women also look after their families and universities have to consider these realities."

Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbat, committed the university to ensuring that matters pertaining to gender equality are prioritised.

"Women are given the opportunity to participate in capacity building programmes that equip them with skills to be competitive in the workplace. Ensure that society creates a pool of highly skilled women who are available to take up senior administrative and professorial positions. The current graduation statistics at Univen auger well for the future as there are significantly more women graduating than men - up to masters' degree levels.

"We must also find ways to increase the number of women graduating with doctoral degrees," he said.

The symposium was organised by the Institute of Gender and Youth Studies in the School of Human and Social Sciences.



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The international Year of Light

"If a person has never made mistake, it simply means that person never tried anything new in life", says Associate Professor of Physics at the University of Johannesburg, Prof Azwinndini Muronga.

Delivering a public lecture themed 'The international Year of Light and Einstein's centenary of general relativity' at Univen, Muronga, also a Univen alumni, emphasised the importance of light and light based technologies in peoples' lives.

"If it was not for light the human community would not be using Facebook, Twitter and Google," he said.

The International Year of Light is a global initiative of the United Nations General Assembly.

Einstein is generally considered the most influential physicist of the 20th century. He was born in Ulm, Württemberg in Germany in 1879. He began his schooling at the Luitpold Gymnasium. In 1896 he entered the Swiss Federal Polytechnic School in Zurich to be trained as a teacher in physics and mathematics.

In 1901, the year he gained his diploma, he acquired Swiss citizenship and, as he was unable to find a teaching post, he accepted a position as technical assistant in the Swiss Patent Office. In 1905 he obtained his doctor's degree.

Einstein developed the special and general theories of relativity. In 1921, he won the Nobel Prize for physics for his explanation of the photoelectric effect. Because relativity was still considered controversial, Einstein received the award for his explanation of the photoelectric effect. He died in 1955, in Princeton, New Jersey, in the USA.



"If it was not for light people would not be using Facebook, Twitter and Google" - Muronga

Univen and Absa partner to get people ready to work

'Ready to work' is a new programme that assists youth at various levels of schooling to gain important skills that enhance their employability.

"The youth is key to unlocking the wealth prospects of South Africa and indeed the entire African continent," says Absa's Citizenship Consultant, Anastasia Peters.

"Considerable investments need to be made to uplift and create opportunities for this group of the population. They are faced with many challenges that limit their ability to engage effectively in the economy.

"Absa has developed a programme, Ready to work, which supports the employability prospects of young people leaving school and looking for work. It targets three key segments - post-graduate youth between 24 and 28 years who

have completed their university education, post-college youth from 21 to 24 years who have a tertiary education at college and post-secondary school learners who have completed secondary school.

"For the programme to be successful, Absa needs to collaborate with government and educational institutions such as Univen," she said.

"Univen is working towards increasing the employability of our graduates through including work experiential learning, entrepreneurship skills and soft skills in the curriculum," says Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlana.

"Absa has identified the right partner as the programme complements our strategies to enhance graduate employability. We welcome the initiative," he said.



A team to get people ready to work - front from left Jan Combrink, Elize Liebenberg, Moni Magongwa, Tondani Nethengwe and Patric Rachidi. Back from left Mandla Mngadi, Peter Mbatlana, Anastasia Peters, Ashly Rasebotsa and Sidelise Mache.

Working together to enhance communities

Students from Univen and the University of Virginia in the USA collaborated on various research projects in an international health research training programme.

This included a study on hypertension and diabetes management, with students conducting training with community health workers and providing information on care and nutrition.

The five-year programme is funded by a grant from the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities in the USA. It offers under-represented minority students intensive, mentored research training and professional development experiences at several international partner sites in South Africa, St Kitts and Nevis, and Uganda. Furthermore, it promotes interest in graduate training and professional schools and develops skills that are essential to analyse and disseminate rigorous scientific research.

The studies were conducted at the Donald Fraiser Hospital, the Thohoyandou Health Centre and the Tiyani Health Centre.

Four Univen students – nursing undergraduates Pumla Skolo and Zandile Sibeko and masters students Nyiko Mondlane and Meskina Makhubele - were selected to visit the University of Virginia recently. They presented their research findings to faculty members and students at the university and were awarded for their outstanding performance and contributions in their respective research projects.

We would like to hear from you!

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Exposing postgraduates to the world

"A university cannot be a university without postgraduate students," says Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlana.

Speaking at the recent annual postgraduate gathering, he said: "We still have to work hard to achieve the Univen we want."

Hosted by Univen's Research and Innovation Directorate, the gathering exposes postgraduate students to the importance of postgraduate studies – including challenges, opportunities and funding possibilities.



Prof Judith Achoka and Prof Frederick Otieno share their views.

Univen postgraduates learning about the world out there.

The Vice Chancellor and Principal of the Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Kenya, Prof Frederick Otieno, said excellence comes with patience and hard work.

The university's Director Research and Extension, Prof Judith Achoka said supervisors should be dedicated, flexible and available when needed by students.



Innovative tools to access food quality and safety

"Food security remains a challenge to almost any country and it needs much attention to help curb food shortages in the near future."

This is according to Prof Dario Campagnone of the University of Teramo in Italy.

Speaking at the Analytical Chemistry conference at Univen recently, Campagnone said different electrochemical approaches can help focus on food transformation.

"These include the detection of polyphenols and antioxidant activities in food samples with the use of nanostructured electrodes and gold nanoparticles. This rapid assessment of food quality and safety obviously enhances the fight against food instability," said Campagnone.



"Food security remains a challenge" – Campagnone.

Learning about service conditions



At a recent workshop, Univen service workers were enlightened about service conditions. Organised by Organisational Development and Training, workers could also raise issues and grievances that affect their work.

Univen peer helpers - lending a helping hand

Univen's Peer Help programme puts assistance within reach of each student in the university community.

As part of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, the programme gives students access to counseling by peer students as it is believed that students open up more willingly to their peers.

The programme also provides assistance to

secondary school learners through career guidance and counseling. Among others, peer helpers are assisting to alleviate poverty through the sharing scheme 'Thohoyanzie'.

"We would like to thank the Univen community for their donations to assist the needy," says the group.

For more information visit the Student Counseling and Career Development Unit, office 35, C-Block.



Servant leadership in honour of Tata Mandela

“Indeed Nelson Mandela was a servant leader who dedicated his life to this nation, and as South Africans we must strive to produce more leaders like him.”

Brownlley Ramulongo, Chairperson, Amplifying Community Voices Students Association, Communication and Marketing Committee

Every year, the Amplifying Community Voices Students Association takes Univen to grassroots communities in the Vhembe District as it joins the international community to celebrate Mandela Day.

This year theme was ‘Developing servant leadership in honour of Tata Mandela’.

The association partnered with the Thulamela Municipality’s Community Services Department to clean the university grounds, the main street leading into town, the shopping complex opposite the Khoroni hotel and two adjacent taxi ranks.

In line with the theme, the association discussed the principles of servant leadership with the Thulamela Municipal Chamber.

In partnership with the ward committee, the Traditional Council and the Civic Association of Ngovhela Village, the association cleaned the Faranani Clinic and the Thomas Ntshavheni Secondary School. The last activity in the village was a servant leadership workshop at the Ngovhela Royal Residence.

At the Thohoyandou Children’s Home and the Tshilidzini Hospital Children’s Ward, the association campaigned against substance abuse, played with the children and handed out toys.

“I believe there is more to giving than receiving,” says Engel Mahlalela, member of the association’s management committee.

“Nelson Mandela loved children. We must therefore do the same, for they are the leaders of tomorrow. We have no choice but to make every day a Mandela Day by doing something to change someone’s life for the better.”

• **For more information on the Amplifying Community Voices Students Association, contact Mphego Mpho on mphommbulungeni@gmail.com or Mukhethwa Shavhani on 1993mkhety@gmail.com**



New employees shown the ropes

A total of 47 new employees attended the recent Univen orientation and induction programme, to integrate them into the organisation. The programme assists with retention of staff, motivation and job satisfaction, enabling each individual to become contributing members of the work team.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations, Dr Jannie Zaaiman, encouraged all new staff members to be self-disciplined while unleashing the full potential of the student.

“To date, Univen has a strong diversity, and our expectation from you is a positive attitude, hard work, constructive criticism and respect for students and other staff and to develop innovation and team skills.”

The Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford, said Univen has a good story to tell in

terms of research output over the past eight years. The University Registrar, Prof Edward Nesamvuni, presented on the governance of the university.

“Create time to know your university by visiting different schools, departments, centres and institutes.”

The Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning team presented on eLearning at Univen, teaching and assessment, theory and practice, student counselling and career development, services for students with disabilities and evaluation practice and personal or professional portfolio development.

Other presentation themes included staff development opportunities, performance management, benefits and processes, examination procedures, work integrated learning and community engagement.



A new employer and new colleagues.

Sustainable forest management – Univen participates

Mashanzhi Arthwell

Every year in June, International Forestry Student Association members participate in a Southern African regional meeting. It affords forestry students, industry experts and academics the opportunity to share regional experiences and discuss ideas and solutions to current and forecasted challenges in sustainable forest management. After the University of Venda successfully hosted the 2014 meeting, this year all roads led to the Zimbabwe National University of Science and Technology.

“Forests support life in various forms - they provide food throughout the season, but most importantly, medicines,” said Pro Vice Chancellor, Dr Samson Sibanda.

A paper ‘Why Sustain?’ was delivered by Univen student Mr Munyaradzi Makoto, which generated an interesting discussion by all delegates. Delegates visited the National Historic Museum of Zimbabwe where there are various collections of

previous forms of life. Zimbabwe’s famous cultural fundi and renowned historian Phathisa Nyathi made a presentation on the role of spirituality in conservation.

“Respect the environment as a way of respecting God, as we are utilitarians of this earth, Apply Ubuntu to conserve biodiversity.”

Other presentation themes included the role of the Forestry Commission in sustainable forest resource management in Zimbabwe, of forests, climate change, national economies, rural livelihoods, sustainable forest utilisation in Mozambique and instruments for forest management opportunities and challenges.



Why sustain? – Univen’s Munyaradzi Makoto presenting.



Taking forestry at heart - Univen Forestry Association delegates.

Venture into rare specialisations in law - Minister

Communications Minister Faith Muthambi launches Univen Law Association

“Law practitioners should focus on rare specialisations in law which include information communication technology, broadcasting and environmental law,” says Communications Minister Faith Muthambi.

Speaking at the launch of the Univen Law Association, Muthambi said the availability of online legal resources, the ability to consult with clients using some form of video-conferencing and increased usage of cloud computing by law firms, lessens the need for staff to sit in a physical office.

“It also includes the ability to store client files and firm records electronically and to obtain access to these documents remotely from anywhere in the world. These are the trends challenging law firms in South Africa and graduates from historically black universities.

“If not dealt with accordingly, the law firms will be outperformed by the competition, and start a backward slide that may lead to eventual closure.

“Students who aspire to become attorneys need to secure articles of clerkship while still working towards completing their degrees. A lack of information contributes to the failure of graduates

to secure job opportunities. Law graduates are also faced with challenges relating to ethics when entering the labour market and declining ethics in the legal profession is worrying.”

The Dean of the Univen School of Law, Annette Lansink, said there is general agreement that the LLB degree is expected to produce well rounded graduates, possessing critical thinking skills and a manifest understanding of the constitution of South Africa and its impact on the development of the law.

“Act ethically in your profession and be committed to promoting social justice and the national development goals. Alumni should embrace continued legal education, especially in the light of the advances in technology on legal services in today’s rapidly changing world.”

The Director of International Tax Services at Ernest and Young and Univen alumni, Rendani Neluvhalani, led a panel of speakers sharing their experiences with other graduates in various fields of law.

Advocate Unarine Makuya was elected chairperson of the Univen Law Alumni Association.



Univen Law Alumni Exco - front from left - Tshogofatso Kgarabjang, Head of Communications, Mpho Stability Nefuri, Deputy Chairperson, Adv Unarine Makuya, Chairperson, Prudence Makhosazane Hlangwana, Secretary and Lerato Raphasha, Deputy Secretary.

Back from left - Dumisani Nghomane, Head of Events and Marketing, Oriel Makhale, Head of Membership and Recruitment, Adv Mafanywa Mangammbi, Treasurer, Oriel Vele, Head of Fundraising, Temitope Obisanya, Head of Special Projects and Community Outreach and Kagiso Mphahlele, Head of Research and Innovation.

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus – contact the tip-off hotline - 0800 212 755, e-mail univenhotline@tip-offs.com