

Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

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University of Venda
Creating future leaders

Guard the opportunity to study – Mbatl

"Research has shown that a university degree is a good predictor for future success in terms of employability, better pay and a better quality of life," says Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatl.

Officially opening the 2017 academic year, Mbatl said it is a privilege when you are selected to study at Univen.

"Jealously guard the opportunity that has been granted to you to study hard. There is a huge demand for higher education. Univen alone received over 22 000 applications last year, with space for only 3 100 first-entering students. Remember the sacrifices that our parents and communities have made to ensure that we access higher education. Let us make them proud by successfully completing our programmes and contributing to the economic growth and development of South Africa and our communities.

"Univen is prepared to nurture you to achieve your dreams and to become the professionals that you have always desired to be. We are committed to pursuing all legitimate processes to ensure that academically deserving students have access to funding from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, university merit bursaries, government sponsors and private sector organisations.

"We provide tablets and laptops to all our students as important learning aids. We are also rolling out e-learning facilities through the blackboard platform - again to ensure that you are trained in a highly competitive environment."

"Univen nurtures you to become the professionals you desire to be" – Mbatl.



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Absa assists needy students

Absa has contributed R500 000 to 24 Univen students of the School of Management Sciences to settle their 2016 debts.

"This partnership boosts both Absa and Univen as students use our services," said Absa's Provincial Head of Business Banking, Umesh Mudhav.

"To us education remains core, hence our sponsorship towards causes that are worthy. "Government alone cannot be our major partner and therefore I urge big business such as Absa to assist where possible," said Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatl.

"If one organisation can fund at least five deserving and financially needy students, much can be achieved.

"We strive towards bringing change and producing products that are in demand in the corporate world, with qualifications that are registered and accredited. Because this area is a place of farming, Absa has seen an opportunity in investing more money in agriculture. Not only Univen students will benefit but also the surrounding communities, especially the rural black historically disadvantaged and small scale farmers," he said.

"Ready-to-Work is one of our shared growth projects that empowers students to compete equally with students from other universities," said Absa's Provincial Head of Public Sector Banking, Ngoako Ashley Rasebotsa.

"The project teaches people a variety of programmes such as interviewing tips, entrepreneurship, work,

people and money skills. We will educate students on how to use a cell phone application to access banking services anywhere and anytime. This will save students a lot of time travelling to branches."

Univen's Director of Finance, Rose Mgobo, said the university appreciated Absa's donation towards academically deserving students.

"It takes a community to raise a child. Absa is one of our parents as we depend on them and will always make sure that we perform our level best and never disappoint them," said one of the beneficiaries, Ronewa Bamuzi.



"To us education remains core" – Absa's Umesh Mudhav.



A common goal - Absa delegates, Univen beneficiaries and management.



"Ready-to-Work empowers students to compete equally with students from other universities" – Absa's Ashley Rasebotsa.



"It takes a community to raise a child and Absa is one of our parents" - Ronewa Bamuzi.

Univen salutes student excellence

A total of 54 high-performing students were awarded during the 5th Vice Chancellor's Student Academic Excellence awards recently.

The overall winner was Ndifelani Murida of the School of Health Sciences. Among the top achievers was Fulufhelo Netshivhera, who was the best student in the School of Management Sciences Foundation, regardless of her physical challenge. She has proved that irrespective of the situation you find yourself in, if you are determined to achieve your goals, everything is possible.

The first level students were awarded R8 000, second level R9 000 and third level R10 000. Twenty percent of the award is in cash, with the remainder in tuition fees, books and accommodation,

which the student determines based on their needs. Univen's Acting Director of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Dr Nancy Mutshaeni, said the awards recognise significant achievements and encourage students to aim for excellence.

"It creates an environment and inspires students to excel in their educational and academic work. This is a way of promoting the culture of learning in the schools."

Physical challenges do not hold you back – one of the top achievers, Fulufhelo Netshivhera with Prof Peter Mbat.



Our top achievers.



The St Engenas ZCC Univen choir entertaining the audience.



Saluting the best – overall best achiever, Ndifelani Murida.

New infrastructure projects at Univen

Univen will continue with a number of infrastructure projects in 2017.

The Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbat, announced at the opening of the 2017 academic year that these projects included student residences, new staff houses, the main gate and a new student centre.

Other projects include a student entertainment centre, an abattoir, a milking parlour, a new building for the School of Health Sciences and the second phase of the School of Education.

"We will also start a couple of new infrastructure

projects which include the institutional multi-denominational house of prayer, a staff recreational facility, a new multipurpose hall for sports and graduation ceremonies, a new building for the School of Human and Social Sciences and the new main administration building," said Mbat.

"My promise in this 10th and final year as the Vice Chancellor is to ensure that our university continues to provide the best service to our community and to all stakeholders - and I shall continue to frown on corruption."

Univen patent to benefit rural communities

Univen has patented a borehole-water defluoridation adsorbent that will benefit rural communities.

“The adsorbent will improve the drinking water of rural African communities that rely on groundwater,” says patent co-founder, Univen’s Prof Jabulani Gumbo.

The patent application of Univen was founded following the 2014-2016 study conducted by Prof Wilson Gitari, Dr Antony Izuagie and Prof Jabulani Gumbo.

The patent application is titled ‘Defluoridation treatment of water with tri-metal Magnesium/Cerium/Manganese Oxide modified diatomaceous earth.’

Univen’s School of Environmental Sciences, with the support of the Water Research Commission and the National Research Foundation, has developed and patented this groundwater treatment adsorbent which will reduce high fluorine found mostly in borehole water in rural dry areas such as Siloam in Nzhelele.

According to the World Health Organization more than 400 rural communities in South Africa depend on borehole water for domestic purposes. As a result, borehole water remains a vital natural resource for the provision of water to South African communities, not excluding industrial and agricultural purposes.

“Fluoride is important in the formation of teeth and bones, if present in drinking water at the right concentrations,” said Gumbo.

“However, borehole water in dry rural areas has too much Ion Fluoride, which limits its use due to chemical constituents such as fluoride occurring above prescribed limits. Concentrations above recommended limits of Fluoride 1.5 mg/l may have negative health impacts such as teeth mottling and deformation of bones.”

Rural communities rely mostly on borehole water for their daily needs and this water source is used directly without any prior treatment. What is more, the borehole water can be contaminated by chemical and microbiological pollutants originating from other natural resources, human activities and onsite sanitation systems used in rural and industrial areas.

The World Health Organization has set a guiding value of 1.5 mg/ l for fluoride in drinking water, while the South African water quality guidelines give a target range of 0-1 mg/ l fluoride for domestic use, depending on regional temperatures.

However, several studies conducted in South Africa have discovered that the borehole water in North West, Limpopo and the Northern Cape contain fluoride in concentrations reaching 30 mg/l. This may require partial defluoridation. This is a clear indication that excessive presence of fluoride in borehole water and surface water is a major technological and economical stumbling block for supply of good quality water in South Africa, especially in rural areas.

From the methods developed for defluoridation of borehole water, adsorption is the only technology that is most suited for rural defluoridation devices. It is increasingly becoming evident that provision of safe and clean water through point-of-use devices is the most ideal technology for geographically isolated communities with no centralised water treatment and distribution systems. Therefore, there was a need to develop cheap, high capacity adsorbents based on locally available materials within the community, that have high fluoride in their groundwater.

The research work leading to the patent being developed by the Environmental Remediation and Water Pollution Chemistry Group, addresses the lack of high capacity adsorbents for fluoride removal in borehole water. The work also sought



“The adsorbent will improve drinking water to rural African communities” – Gumbo.

to prepare an adsorbent from readily available and cheap natural material that is not toxic.

The developed adsorbent will further be tested in field application, using commercially available point-of-use devices to ascertain its commercial viability. In addition, further studies are planned to ascertain its impact on common pathogens in surface and groundwater.

Gitari is a C3 rated researcher. He has published over 72 articles in peer reviewed Department of Higher Education and Training accredited journals, over 100 articles in peer reviewed conference proceedings, non-reviewed conference proceedings, abstracts, technical reports to industries and invited talks. He also holds three other patents in Acid Mine Drainage Treatment Technology and has published two book chapters.

Gumbo has published 24 articles in peer reviewed Department of Higher Education and Training accredited journals. He has 22 peer reviewed conference proceedings and has published one book chapter, chaired national and international conferences and has been the keynote speaker at various international conferences.



Prof Wilson Gitari and Dr Anthony Izuagie.

Well done school administrators!

“I am happy to see such a great team at work - if we carry on to serve our students, we will steer this university in the right direction.”

With these words, Univen’s Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbati expressed his satisfaction with the 2017 registration process.

Accompanied by the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford and the Assistant Registrar, Mpariseni Ligudu, Mbati visited all the registration venues. By the close of business on 24 January, 11 096 students were already registered online - fast and hassle-free.

About two years ago, university management initiated a business process re-engineering project plan to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the selection, admission and registration processes. This successful project witnessed the smooth and efficient 2017 registration process.

Students and parents alike expressed their appreciation for the smooth registration process.

Mbati said Univen and parents work together to ensure that opportunities are given to students to pursue their careers as future leaders.

“The transition from secondary school to tertiary education can be intimidating and sometimes confusing. It brings joy to me when I see parents giving all their support to their children to settle into their new way of life as university students.”



Univen management interacting with students and parents.

Go the extra mile - SRC president

"It is very painful and stressful to see learners who passed matric not being allowed to study at a university," says Univen Student Representative Council President, Mandla Shikwambana.

Speaking at the Univen 2017 orientation, Shikwambana said some students were not accepted as they did not pass matric with enough marks.

"To have a bachelor's pass, which is a university entrance, is not enough. You do not even qualify to enrol in any foundation programme at any university in the world. A 20 percent pass mark has never and will never qualify anyone to study at a university.

"When you visit your homes during recess, advise your brothers and sisters who are doing matric to go the extra mile when studying, to pass with at least 50 percent, as this might help them to enrol at universities.

"Meet the minimum requirement because that is the passport to a university. If you meet the requirements, then we will be able to assist you - but that doesn't mean you will be on the programme of your choice because every degree has its required points of entry.



"You chose Univen where you are guaranteed your qualifications if you study hard" – Shikwambana.

"There are many universities but you chose Univen where you are guaranteed your qualifications if you study hard. Do not compare yourselves with students from other universities - know your struggle and why you are here."

He said students who do not have a sound financial background should apply for financial assistance from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

"I would like to believe that the majority of you have submitted your applications to the scheme. When only a few students apply, you give the scheme's officials the impression that the majority of Univen students do not need financial aid. If you do not apply and come to us complaining about funding your studies, you will be making it difficult for us to win the battle. Submit your application to make it easy for us to help you. Attend classes from the first day - this is the reason for being here. Let education be your number one priority," he said.

Univen's Director of Legal Services, Advocate Edward Lambani, discouraged students from cheating in tests and examinations.

"Breaking the academic integrity code is punishable. Univen does not recycle problems because we are united with other South African universities. If you are caught cheating here, we will make sure that we suspend you for at least six months, depending

on the type of crime that you have committed. We will make sure that you do not register at any university in this country," he said.

"At Univen we encourage diversity of both cultures and points of view," said the university's Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford.

"Thank you for trusting Univen and making it part of your big step of a lifetime - that is, making the transition from secondary school to university.

"Univen has been doing well for the past ten years. Ten years ago we were producing two or three PhD's but last year alone we produced 29 PhD graduates - a new record for this university. We offer only qualifications that are duly approved, registered and accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training and by professional bodies involved in the accreditation of courses.

"Today we are proud to be part of this university because of its massive transformation - hence you should also make your first experience at Univen, the one to remember for the rest of your life. You should be able to distinguish between schooling and education. Never let schooling interfere with your education. Schooling is about you being taught in class and education is about what you learn on your own. Education is about learning, not cramming for the sake of passing the tests.



"Thank you for trusting Univen with this big step" – Crafford.



It's great to be at Univen!



New communications officer

Peter Mashishi has been appointed as Assistant Media and Publications Officer from 1 January. He will be based in the Media and Publications Section.

Make sure that you are educated by the time you leave this university because that will guarantee you survival in the corporate world and in life," he said.

"Univen strictly says no to xenophobia," said Univen's Director of International Relations, Cornelius Hagenmeier.

"We encourage everyone to treat others the way they want to be treated, regardless of where they come from."

Univen's Finance Manager: Income, Benji Ngobeni, advised first-entering students that if there is anything that they don't understand about financial matters, his office is always open to assist them.

The President of Convocation, Levy Ndou, said Univen's alumni has established chapters for different schools with former students who assist current students in different fields of study about career development.

The Acting Director of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Dr Nancy Mutshaeni, said the centre welcomes students with disabilities.

"Come to us and disclose your kind of disability to enable us to know where and how we can assist you," she said.

The Director of the Institute for Rural Development, Prof Joseph Francis, highlighted the activities of the Community Engagement Directorate.

"First-entering students should participate in community engagement activities before they leave or finish their degrees. Participation develops critical thinking skills and experience."

The Head of Student Accommodation, Luthando Charlie, advised new students on how to interact with the office and make use of the SRC office.

The Dean of the School of Health Sciences, Senior Prof Base Khoza, said students should take every speaker seriously as they know what they are talking about.

Council member one of few female black epidemiologists

Univen Council member Prof Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya has obtained an MSc in Epidemiology - a scarce skills area in many parts of the world.

“Coupled with her doctoral degree, this makes for a rare skill on the African continent,” said Univen’s Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatia.

Phaswana-Mafuya completed an MSc Epidemiology in 2016 with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, sponsored by the Africa London Nagasaki Scholarship Fund. Her programme covered modules in advanced statistical methods in Epidemiology, Epidemiology of communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases.

The qualification will be conferred at a graduation ceremony in March. She was one of five candidates out of 480 applicants from 26 African countries selected for this fellowship. She was supported by the Wellcome Trust Fellowship and the National Research Incentive Funding for rated scientists.

“It has been a distinct blessing to study this course at this eminent university, supported by such a

prestigious fellowship,” said Phaswana-Mafuya.

“The MSc synchronises well with the HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases epidemiological studies that I have been leading and co-leading for over ten years. I can express without fear of contradiction that the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine trains world class epidemiologists in the best way. I am grateful for the opportunity of a lifetime to become one of the few qualified female black epidemiologists in my country.

“I am also humbled to be part of the school’s alumni association, providing me with a lifelong link. I shall use the insights I have gained in this course to produce high quality epidemiological research for the betterment of my society. I shall also serve as a role model to aspiring scientists, especially women scientists from disadvantaged backgrounds like me.

“Epidemiology is the key discipline underlying medical research, public health practice and health care evaluation. The understanding of its principles and practice is crucial for those involved in the

design or assessment of epidemiological studies and programme evaluation. Epidemiological methods are also used to describe the size and nature of health problems. It also investigates the aetiology of specific diseases and evaluates the impact of interventions for treating and preventing ill health.

Phaswana-Mafuya is a long serving research director in the HIV/AIDS research programme of the Human Sciences Research Council and an honorary professor at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

She obtained a research master’s degree in 1998 and a PhD in Injury Prevention in 2002 at the University of the North. She is a C2 rated National Research Foundation health behavioural scientist and an Academy of Science in South Africa merited scientist. She has been working on HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases for over ten years with a publication record of over 85 journal articles in nationally and internationally accredited



journals. She wrote a book on non-communicable diseases, several book chapters and many scientific reports.

Phaswana-Mafuya was awarded the Human Sciences Research Council’s CEO award in 2012 for exemplary, innovative and high quality work. She also completed a postgraduate diploma in epidemiology in 2013.

Once you are educated, there is no undo

“Education is important because once you are educated, there is no undo.”

This is according to Simon Mtsuki, motivational speaker at the recent Univen Thuthuka orientation.

“Education is a treasure that no-one can steal from you. People who are perceived as educated are also trusted by the public,” he said.

Thuthuka is a capacity building project for students studying BCom Accounting Sciences.

“Take the next four years seriously and dedicate them to your studies. Tell yourself that you will do other things such as partying after completing this programme. Cheap decisions are expensive - work even harder than you did in Grade 12. The same person who obtained lower marks will be in the same class and will be aiming high to get better marks than you.

“No matter where you come from, the transition from secondary school to tertiary education will change you. Use this opportunity as it might be the only one to change the situation where you come from.

“Do not despise some of the modules in your study programme. If you don’t like the module, focus on passing that module and move to other modules so that you don’t have to stress about it. Remember all the modules have been put together to make you a competent professional.”

“I chose Univen because I heard about the Thuthuka programme and I love numbers,” said first-entering student Rhandzu Mkhawana.

“The programme gives us opportunities to become chartered accountants, another reason why I chose Accounting Sciences. I will invest more time in my studies to make sure that I achieve my goals,” she said.



“Education is a treasure that no one can steal from you” – Mtsuki.



Rights Mkhari joins women rugby sevens team

Rights Mkhari, a second year student in the Centre for Biokinetics, Recreation and Sport Sciences, joined the training sessions of the women's national rugby sevens team in Cape Town. She left Univen in January for training to prepare for the coming international rugby tournament. She has been part of the national womens rugby team since the beginning of 2016.

Rights Mkhari (right) in action!



Mr & Miss Univen shine at SA campus competition

Mr Univen, Wisdom Chauke and Miss Univen, Fhulufhelo Khobo, were crowned the best couple at the South African Campus competition – Univen's first-ever appearance at the competition.

"It was a great experience and a tight competition, but I am happy that we came back with the biggest award of the year," said Chauke, a 4th level Bachelor of Hydrology and Water Resources student.

"As part of our commitment, we are working on community outreach programmes which are assisting the surrounding communities, especially the youth and non-governmental organisations."

The programmes include orphanage visits, hospital outreach, career awareness campaigns for grade 12 learners, student to business linkage, scientific calculators for rural schools and a sanitary towels programme.

"We have also initiated a programme which is in line with university activities and preferences. We have also been invited by the principal of one of the secondary schools around Malamulele in September to motivate grade 12 learners when they were about to write their final exams."

A line up of winners.



Walking the talk – Mr and Ms Univen distribute sanitary towels at the Govhu secondary school.

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