



Leadership can improve student life at Univen – Martin

"You have been wise to choose Univen," said Univen's Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations, Dr Robert Martin.

Officially opening the university's academic year recently, Martin said Univen is committed to supporting free higher education for financially needy students.

"However, mindful of the pressure on staff and facilities that the growth in enrolment poses, I urge all staff members to make every effort to treat students with dignity. Provide the necessary service to ensure that all registered students receive quality service with minimal inconvenience.

"Thank you to everybody who played a part to ensure a smooth and incident free registration process. Univen remains committed to improving its facilities and services to students. We are also committed to completing a number of infrastructure projects taking place on campus, particularly student residences.

"Despite the challenges which the South African higher education sector continues to

experience, the sustained growth of Univen continued and the campus environment remained stable and calm. Our research output grew strongly with the number of rated researchers increasing significantly to 26.

"2018 is going to be a particularly challenging year, but also a year that presents immense possibilities and innovations for higher education in South Africa," said Martin.

"I am impressed with the calibre of young men and women who are represented on Univen's SRC cabinet. Since they came into office, they have demonstrated a good level of maturity in their interactions with the university management and an understanding of higher education issues. I applaud you for actively pursuing an agenda aimed at improving the service that Univen offers students."

Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford, thanked the SRC President, Lindokuhle Lukhele, for motivating members of his cabinet to make education fashionable.



"Univen treats students with dignity" – Martin.

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Don't bribe officials for admission - SRC President

"Student assistants should never take money from anyone in exchange for anything," says Univen's SRC President, Lindokuhle Lukhele.

Speaking during Univen's official orientation programme, Lukhele said even if it is a token of appreciation, do not take it, because it might cause problems in future.

"First-entering students should also never pay a bribe to anyone in exchange for a favour or a service. Report anyone who demands anything from you in exchange for being assisted. It is our duty to assist you free of charge, because we are here to serve you.

"Invest most of your time in your studies. Finish your degrees within the stipulated time as this will open spaces for other qualifying students," he said.

"We want you to help us achieve all our institutional values," said the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford.

"We want you to help us produce valuable and quality graduates. We strive to produce quality leaders."

"Make use of the Financial Aid Office – it is there to serve you," said the Head of Financial Aid and Reporting, Benji Ngoben.

"Participate in community engagement activities because this will help boost your CVs and improve your personal profiles," said the Director of Community Engagement, Prof Vhonani Netshandama.

"Participating in community engagement might even increase your chances of getting scholarships."

"Engage with international students and make them feel at home," said the Acting Director of International Relations, Dr Segun Obadire.

"Contact my office for more information regarding exchange programmes and international scholarships."

"Attend all orientation programmes – they have been prepared to assist you," said the acting Director of Student Affairs, Lufuno Tshikhudo.

"These student structures and facilities include the campus clinic, student residences and sporting facilities."

Prof Nancy Mutshaeni, the Director of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, said the Academic Development Unit, Student Counselling, the Career Development Unit and the Disability Unit are designed to assist students.



"Never pay a bribe to anyone in exchange for a favour or a service" – Lukhele.



First-entering students and staff members at the official 2018 orientation.

Univen overcomes challenges during 2018 registration



A smile to remember - Nthabeleng Kwindu is delighted to be a registered Univen student.

Unlike previous years, the 2018 academic admission and registration process was a memorable one.

First-entering students made history by being the first group to receive free tertiary education – now known as first-time entrants.

Univen’s Assistant Registrar, Mpfariseni Ligudu, says prior to the re-opening of the university, the Student Administration Section selected and admitted students who applied for admission before the closing date in 2017.

“When the national matric results were announced on 5 January 2018, the university auto-selected applicants and sent messages to admitted students, inviting them to register online from 8 to 19 January 2018.

“The president’s announcement in December 2017 about free tertiary education caused unusual challenges. One of these was that there is limited space for first-entering students. Univen received 24 000 applications for 2018 with only 3 100 spaces for new students.”

On 15 January, the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations, Dr Robert Martin visited the registration site to check whether everything was going according to plan, especially registration of first-entering students.

“I was impressed with the way everything was handled during this tough time on the academic calendar.”

Mapaseka Mokgaphane, Univen SRC Minister of Information said that the admission and registration of first-entering students went according to the plan.

“Everything ran smoothly. What was most exciting was to see students smiling because at last they got what they wanted, having waited for free education for many years. This has made disadvantaged students who come from poor backgrounds access education like every other citizen of this country. Those who did not apply were given a window for late application.

“Everyone has the right to further education which the state, through reasonable measures, must make available and accessible.”

Nthabeleng Kwindu, one of the 3 100 students who managed to register at Univen, is excited about being a registered student.

“I am currently registered for a Bachelor of Environmental Sciences. I was desperate to be a registered student of the University of Venda.

“I always accept challenges and believe in positivity. Throughout the process of registration, I have learned that you don’t always get what you want in life. People should learn to accept what is available because God knows our future. He cannot give us things that we cannot handle.”

Kwindu is one of the students who will receive free education.



Patiently waiting - prospective students queueing to receive acceptance letters to register.



Useful information - Mapaseka Mokgaphane, Minister of Information, providing clarity about late online application to prospective students.



First-entering and returning students in the registration queue.



Getting clarity - Dr Robert Martin engaging with student assistants and members of the SRC regarding registration the processes.

Rendani Sitholimela - best overall student

Rendani Sitholimela, a third year student in Computer Science and Information Systems who hails from Tshedza, Nzhelele, was awarded as Univen's best overall student for 2017.

"I always wanted to be the best student and make my family proud. The thought of not disappointing my family kept me motivated. Never give up - put your mind to everything you do, then you will achieve the best results.

"Students should start believing in themselves and in what they do, then they will achieve their objectives. My dream is to become a software engineer," he said.

More than 50 students with outstanding performance were awarded as part of the Vice Chancellor's Student Academic Excellence awards.

"You deserve to be praised for having devoted most of your time to your studies," said the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations, Dr Robert Martin.

"Congratulations to the winners. If you did not make it this time around, the time is now to work towards excellence next time."

"The awards celebrate top academic student achievers," said the Director of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Prof Nancy Mutshaeni.

"The awards promoted a culture of teaching and learning."

Hard work rewarded – best overall student, Rendani Sitholimela, with his certificates and trophies



Congratulations are in order - best performers displaying their certificates and trophies.



Congratulations young man – from left, Dr Robert Martin, Rendani Sitholimela and Prof Jan Crafford.



"Celebrating top academic student achievers" – Mutshaeni.



Proud recipients of the Vice Chancellor's Academic Excellence awards.

Emerald Publishing awards quiz winners

The Emerald Publishing Group in partnership with Univen's library, hosted the Emerald Univen Quiz awards recently.

The winners were Patricia Macil, who received a tablet and keyboard, Ntanga Sadiki, who won a backpack and Edward Netshilaphala, who received an Emerald hamper. Seventeen students entered.

"The quiz creates awareness and grows student use of the library," said Sibu Zondi of Emerald Publishing South Africa.

The winners - from left Edward Netshilaphala (3rd position), Terry Leboho (on behalf of Patricia Macil) and Ntanga Sadiki (2nd position).



We would like to hear from you!

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Reviving old songs

The Connecting Culture and Childhood Project recently hosted a singing competition known as Nambi Ya Dzinambi/From Archive to Artist. The artists used old songs from the archives in a new form such as hip hop, RnB, VenRap and traditional.

The project brings heritage recordings of traditional Vhavenda music back to the original communities and owners. This is further enhanced by engaging children and young people by listening to and learning traditional Vhavenda songs that were recorded a long time ago.

The project is a partnership between Univen, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and York University. The research collaboration is led by York University's Associate Professor Dr Andrea Emberly, Univen Senior Lecturer Dr Elelwani Ramaite-Mafadza and Dr Mudzunga Davhula.

"We are proud of our culture and encourage ethno-musicologists to be proud of their cultural music," said Davhula.

Traditional dances such as Tshikona, Domba, Zwidade and Malende were performed.

The judges were Jimmy Netshilulu, Mbulaheni Nelson Milubi, Dr Mudzunga Davhula and Vho-Mme Azwinndini Elisa Rannzwa. They encouraged performers to learn Zwidade and to wear traditional attire when performing.

The winner in the instruments category was Willard Mufamadi, with Richard Mamatsharaga in the second place. Mercy Madzivhandila won the solo artist category with Sir Mclecker in the second place. Mukwevho Tshigombela and Domba laha Muraga championed the traditional dance category.

"I'm very happy to be number one - I worked very hard prior to this competition," said Mercy Madzivhandila.

"The competition motivated me and I'm going to produce a traditional music album."

The winners walked away with R2 000 each, with the runner-ups receiving R1 000 each.



"Be proud of your culture" – Davhula.



"I am so happy" - Mercy Madzivhandila.



Tshikona dancers entertaining the audience.



A winning line-up

Health and safety essential in the workplace

As a developing country, South Africa's workforce plays a key role in service delivery.

Therefore, the importance of having skilled and capable workers cannot be overemphasised. Not only does it improve the lives of South Africans, but it also assists local government structures in meeting their constitutional mandate.

The Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) hosted a research seminar series at Univen recently. It was themed 'Creating a greater impact through a credible research agenda in the local government sector'.

"Service delivery has to improve within municipalities," said Cuen Sharrock of the University of Pretoria.

Presenting on the impact assessment on discretion funded programmes, Sharrock said training is a change management process.

"Constraints in my research were the lack of participation from the municipality and the unavailability of data. Management's intent is critical and there is a need for space to allow for changes in behaviour," he said.

"Today's competitive success is achieved through people," said Godfrey Hlaele of Univen's Public and Development Administration.

Presenting on skills transfer in South African municipalities, Hlaele said that the skills and performance of people are critical for the success of any municipality.

"Training improves productivity in any organisation. Many organisations spend a lot of money in training, believing that it will improve their employees. However, training is useless if it cannot be translated into performance."

The purpose of the study was to understand

the nature of the learning environment in municipalities, to develop a strategy that will inform the Local Government SETA on skills transfer and to understand the link between lack of skills and service delivery.

"The challenge of skills transfer will always be linked with the development and transfer of skills. It should, therefore, be addressed simultaneously. When choosing a training course, ensure the training is specific to the skills the employee needs to develop," said Hlaele.

Participants agreed that unemployed people must be empowered and young people should be equipped with skills and knowledge.

LGSETA provides an environment to facilitate the training and upskilling of various employees and people involved in local government structures, as well as unemployed South Africans.



"Change takes time to manifest" – Sharrock.



Attendees at an insightful seminar. "Training improves productivity in any organisation" – Hlaele.

Univen participates in Leading like Mandela workshop

Univen's local and international students participated in a 'Leading like Mandela' leadership workshop at the University of Johannesburg recently.

Ten students were selected from different universities – Univen, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand, Potchefstroom and Sol Plaatje. The programme was facilitated by the Thembekile Mandela Foundation.

The workshop was comprised of talks about various aspects of leadership insights of Nelson Mandela, visits to various important sites such as the Nelson Mandela home in Soweto and the Hector Peterson Museum, and fireside discussions around Mandela's leadership perspective.

It also included discussion topics like sacrifices, knowing oneself, values, beliefs, key character

traits, competences, strengths and weaknesses. Discussions also delved into key actions like behaviours and traits for proper leadership.

One of the facilitators, Ndileka Mandela, said "since we are affected by the environment around us, we are able to bring the needed change for a brighter and sustainable future to those around us."

Participants were grateful for being selected and promised to put into practice what they have learnt. They reiterated that a great leader should be approachable, humble, dedicated, accountable, transparent and committed.

The Directorate of International Relations coordinated the programme with funding support from the Academic Liaison Committee.



Participants say "Amandla, awethu!"

“Univen remains the proud beneficiary of Mbatl’s efforts”

“With your dedication, commitment and unequalled love for Univen, you transformed this university from humble beginnings to one of the most recognised academic institutions of our beloved country.”

So said the Chairperson of the Univen Council, Serobi Maja.

Speaking at the recent farewell function for outgoing Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatl, Maja said: “When you took over in 2008, the institution looked like a glorified high school with very few amenities. You have spearheaded the much needed construction of modern lecture halls, office space, student residences and other infrastructure projects that compete with the best in the country and on the continent. We remain the proud beneficiaries of your efforts to lift the university from hopelessness into sunlit pathways of hope and fulfilment.

“The many academic and student exchange programmes that we have witnessed over the past years are testimony to your relentless efforts to make our institution not only a university of choice, but an institution that will stand its ground among other universities of the world.

“As Council members we salute the role you played to ensure that Univen produces high quality graduates that will become assets and not liabilities of the country. Your name and personality will remain indelible in our minds for years to come.”

“You were the most profound, visionary vice chancellor that the university ever had in its history,” said the Univen Council Academic Staff representative, Malehu Maluleke.

“You came at a time when the morale of Univen staff members was very low. You reversed the status quo, bringing huge relief and hope to the entire university. We are no longer ashamed to engage in robust debates with academics from other institutions, not only in the Southern African region but worldwide, and to proudly mention the name of the university.

“You brought a facelift to the University of Venda, not only in terms of its infrastructure, but also in its core business. You ensured that there is real

transformation and you were at the helm of that transformation.

“Through your visionary leadership, during the times of #FeesMustFall, we witnessed tranquillity and stability, when most of the South African universities were experiencing protests, accompanied by violent events.

“We saw many career focused programmes being accredited by the Council for Higher Education, among those the Bachelor of Accounting Sciences Degree and the Agricultural Engineering Programme.

“Most academics and administration staff members improved their qualifications, evidenced by an overwhelming number of MA’s and PHD’s which were conferred during graduations during your tenure.

“Through your dedication and selflessness you steered the university academically, from the bottom to the top. All of this was not achieved by chance or by accident, neither through magic nor miraculously - it came about through hard work, determination and much endurance.”

“You transformed the intolerable condition of Univen into the institution of choice,” said former Chairperson of Council, Shirley Mabusela.

“When I joined Univen, the condition was a mess. Lecture halls were too small to accommodate all students but today, it is markedly different. Regardless of the amount of pressure, you produced quality work. Today, I can proudly stand up and talk about Univen without any doubts.”

“Univen experienced a remarkable increased percentage of publications, the graduation rate has improved enormously and external funding for research has improved,” said the Executive Director: National Research Foundation, Dr Ndanduleni Nthambeleni.

“The number of National Research Foundation rated researchers has increased from two in 2009 to 26 in 2017, staff members with doctoral qualifications have increased to 40 percent, way above the national average of 32 percent and the number of PhD graduates has increased from six in 2007 to 37 in 2017.”

“When Prof Mbatl came, this university was like an RDP house - or rather like the village of Alexandra,” said former Student Representative Council President, Mafulo Mudau.

“We had no proper governing system, infrastructure, and we were like lost sheep without a shepherd.

“Infrastructure like residences, classrooms, labs and offices were lacking, many departments were struggling, some not even existing. Today, we are proud to post pictures on Facebook, Twitter and other social media tools, bragging about our institution.

“During his term in office, he encouraged us to be leaders who provide solutions, not be part of the problem, and who also excel academically. He also fought fraud and corruption with distinction and that led to many dismissals. Therefore, we don’t want fraudsters and plagiarism masters entering via the back door. Whenever you see such tendencies or symptoms raising its head, you always acted harshly and you were never scared to take a decision, no matter how hard or painful it might be.

“Our campus has not experienced violent protests

Condomise to prevent HIV/Aids

On 1 December last year, people across the world commemorated World AIDS Day, raising awareness of the global spread of HIV/Aids.

A Univen masters student in Public Health, Tinyiko Hestine Manganyi, encouraged everyone to take the step and get tested for HIV and other related diseases.

“According to The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS data collected in 2017, it is estimated that one million people died of AIDS-related illnesses in 2016 worldwide,” said Manganyi.

“By the end of 2015, 36,7 million people were estimated to live with the virus world-wide. In 2015, an estimated 266 000 South Africans became infected with HIV - and each week there are an estimated 2 000 new HIV infections in adolescent girls and young women between 15 and 24.

“South Africans should act to reduce new HIV infections because there is progress made in the fight against Aids. The health and lives of millions of South Africans are at risk due to this virus. People’s behaviour, relationships and attitudes should determine the means to end HIV infection.

“Many of our people, particularly young women, find themselves in distressed circumstances. But they do not need to become victims of those circumstances, they should not feel alone. In case of distressed circumstances, they should seek help and support from parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, social workers and health workers. Professional workers such as teachers, social workers and health workers can give more information on how to live a healthy lifestyle which is HIV-free,” said Manganyi.

“I am pledging to encourage everyone to take the step and get tested for HIV and other related diseases. If everyone gets tested, people will be

aware of their HIV status and make informed decisions about their lives. The benefit of knowing your HIV status is that, if negative, you will be encouraged to maintain that status. If positive, you will be put on antiretroviral treatment to manage the virus.

“The South African government provides citizens with condoms which are freely accessed by everyone. They are easily found in public places like public toilets, institutions’ security gates, taxi ranks and taverns. I encourage everyone to have confidence to say “No condom, no sex” and “one condom, one round,” he said.



“Let’s get tested” - Manganyi.

for quite some time, because of your open-door policy which allows even a ground man to feel free to come and talk to you. Even when we deadlocked, you never threatened to expel us, unlike others.

“Introducing the ‘Grow your own timber’ project, we saw how a visionary and preservative leader you are. That is why today we have former student council presidents and members with degrees. That’s what leadership is.”

“Through your leadership you made sure that Univen is where it is today,” said former Student Representative Council President, Mashudu Nthulane

“You had an open door policy to all staff members and students. You have imparted knowledge and skills to most of us. We could differ – I have learned so much from you, not only as the Vice Chancellor, but also as a father.”

“For 31 years I have been witnessing happenings at Univen, as I did witness the very first presentation by Prof Mbatl as he assumed office,” said NEHAWU Univen Chairperson, Alfred Mutoti.

“He ensured that the entire university community was present – communicating with everybody, a trademark he never failed to apply.

“Whilst I have experienced different kinds of leadership styles during my career, I have never quite experienced that of Prof Mbatl. The highly magnative attraction makes him attract all people to support him. He truly leads by example.

“I supported his building recovery phase and he

approved my supervision of the second phase. I enforced quality delivery by contractors and those buildings are still reflecting those qualities, even today.

“He brought changes to all Univen spheres of life. Doors were always open to all. Mbatl is a good listener, a good strategic thinker and a good specialist of writing and presenting proposals.

“He attracted the former Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, who became a dear Univen friend, he attracted donors for funds and partnerships - a hunter who never came home empty-handed.

“The relationship between NEHAWU and Univen was at times not good, but new leaders determine the dynamics of such relationships – Mbatl and I worked together to the benefit of Univen and the workers. NEHAWU became a whistle blower against fraud and corruption and those implicated were charged and expelled. We stood the test of time and fully realising that real leaders are principled, we will not deter from actions that benefit rightminded people.

“You lifted Univen high. Your mark will remain forever in the history of Univen.”

In his vote of thanks, the Chairperson of the Human Resources Committee, Kennedy Maimela said Prof Mbatl is a good leader and a selfless person.

“Prof Mbatl, wherever you go, please remember that you can always remain an ambassador of Univen.”



“You made Univen an institution that will stand its ground among other universities of the world” - Maja.



Awarding an icon - Shirley Mabusela and Peter Mbatl.



A job well done - Serobi Maja (left) and Shirley Mabusela congratulating Peter Mbatl.

A visionary leader

“Anybody can become a ‘boss’, however Prof Mbati was a visionary leader,” says the Dean of the School of Human and Social Sciences, Prof Mokgale Makgopa.

Speaking at Mbati’s recent Senior Management Committee’s farewell function, Makgopa said the vice chancellor possessed many special talents - effort, humility, compassion and dedication. His leadership skills made it easy for him to manage the entire university, regardless of professional background.

“He led by persuasion rather than coercion. He is a good listener, mentor and motivator. His wisdom and leadership has shaped Univen into what it is today, counted among the top higher education institutions in South Africa.

“Before your arrival, Univen was tiny, not a significant rural university. Those who visited the university a few years ago, now marvel at the new buildings. It is sad that you will exit your physical association with us while some of these buildings are yet to be completed. We can only hope that



Go well Prof - Dr Robert Martin and Prof Peter Mbati.



Farewell to a comrade - Univen Senior Management Committee members and staff members with Prof Mbati.

your successor will see through your infrastructural vision for the university.”

“When the Univen community entrusted me with the responsibility of serving as the vice chancellor, I knew that I needed to work hard and develop strategies, with collective wisdom. I had to get the buy-in of the Council and staff at all levels,” said Mbati.

“The future, though fraught with uncertainties, especially as it relates to the funding and sustainability of universities due to factors such as inflation, global performance of the Rand and the #FeesMustFall campaign, present exciting possibilities.

“Univen will need to reimagine its governance and leadership to align to the new realities that demand

increased third-stream income funding and new and relevant curricula that repositions it into the new status of a ‘top ten’ South African university. Most importantly, strengthened cohesion and unity between all stakeholders to ensure a prosperous and successful Univen will be the order of the day.”

Prof Mbati showed us what good leadership entails,” said University Registrar, Prof Edward Nesamvuni.

“You have internationalised Univen on both the African and the global map,” said Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Jan Crafford. “Your legacy is going to speak for itself.”

Other members had the opportunity to express their views about Prof Mbati’s leadership and his role in the advancement of the University of Venda.

Univen awards long serving staff members

Univen recently acknowledged staff members who have served the university for ten, twenty and thirty years.

“I salute senior management and every employee who have translated the vision and dreams that I had for Univen into the successes that we see all around us today,” said Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbati.

“Through your contribution and hard work, Univen is where it is today,” said the Director of Human Resources, Justice Manenzhe.

“Continue to serve Univen with pride and dedication.”

“We thank Univen for the opportunity to serve at this special institution,” said Prof Agnes Musyoki on behalf of the retiring academic staff members.

“It has been a time of great transformation and reflection, not only at the university, but in the country as a whole. We have grown our intellectual capacities and contributed to changing the future of many students and colleagues.

“The students, in turn and in many ways, contributed to our growth as they entered into a sharing of ideas and knowledge with us, at times

challenging our views but leading us to share a better understanding of our fields of study,” she said.

On behalf of the service staff, Shumani Nthambeleni expressed gratitude to the university leadership for giving them the opportunity to work for Univen.

“These awards will motivate us to work even harder and produce the best results.”



Dedicated staff members who served Univen with pride for 30 years.



...and for 20 years.



...and for 10 years.



Congratulations! - Prof Mbati.



“Thank you for serving with pride and dedication” – Manenzhe.



“You have contributed to changing the future of many students and colleagues” - Musyoki.



“Thank you Univen for giving us the opportunity to work for you” – Nthambeleni.

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