

## Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA



University of Venda

# Saluting the cream of the crop – Vice Chancellor's excellence awards

The continuous contributions by Univen's prominent researchers were recognised during the Vice Chancellor's recent Excellence Awards in Research, Community Engagement and Teaching and Learning.

The best overall winners in the three categories were Mrs Agnes Mathaulula of the Institute for Rural Development, Prof Sonto Maputle of the School of Health Sciences and Advocate Gideon Joubert of the School of Law. Each of them received R10 000, a trophy and a certificate.

The awards ceremony was attended by the Univen Chancellor, Kgalema Motlanthe, the Botswana International University of Science and Technology, the Director of Research of Mpumalanga University, representatives from the Office of the Premier Limpopo, the National Research Foundation and the Deputy Chair of Council, Thovhele Midiyavhathu Kennedy Tshivhase.

"A university should remain rooted to the surrounding communities it serves, otherwise there is no knowledge that speak to the reality of life for which the university exists in the first place," said Motlanthe.

"If we are able to, with the limited resources available at our disposal, achieve research excellence that ravelers our national and international counterparts, we are set to become a university that creates future leaders. We still have to address challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Once enhancing our university excellence to meet existing demands of these challenges, will go a long way towards undoing the historical legacy. Producing excellent research outcomes and with that enhancing our application, is yet another way of helping us to attract funding as an institution."

Most of the awardees received R50 000 which will be used towards research and learning activities and R5 000 in person.

Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlile led by example as he was among the 23 National Research Foundation's rated researchers.

"There is a flourish development in research at the University of Venda," said Mbatlile.

"We celebrate all these developments each year and have been able to pursue a sustainable research growth at the university,"

This year 285 active researchers were awarded research merit certificates.

The award for the school with the highest number of active researchers and doctoral students that graduated during May and September 2015 went to the School of Human and Social Sciences. The award was received by the Dean of the School, Prof Mokgale Makgopa.

"The awards which recognise prominent achievers among your staff will further stimulate more interest in excellence and enhance commitment of the community, the country, the region and the world at large," said the Vice Chancellor of the Botswana International University of Science and Technology, Prof Otlogetswe Totolo.

"A university is a catalyst for positive change in the local community, the state, the nation and the world. Universities are often judged by the performance of their citizens and the impact they make on their societies – both immediate and distant. In terms of excellence in engagement and community services, universities can make major contributions to the development of the regions and communities in which they are located.

"They have a key function to generate knowledge through research, transferring knowledge through education and training, disseminating knowledge through publications and exploring knowledge and discoveries. The society must feel the impact and presence of the university within its boundaries," said Totolo.



"A university should remain rooted to the surrounding communities it serves" - Motlanthe.



"A university is a catalyst for positive change in the local community" - Prof Otlogetswe Totolo.



**Dedication pays off** - Prof Peter Mbatlile, Chancellor Kgalema Motlanthe, Thovhele Kennedy Tshivhase, Prof Jan Crafford and Prof Otlogetswe Totolo with some of the top achievers.



**National Research Foundation rated researchers acknowledged** - Prof Peter Mbatlile, Chancellor Kgalema Motlanthe, Thovhele Kennedy Tshivhase, Prof Jan Crafford, and Prof Otlogetswe Totolo pose with some of the NRF rated researchers.



The best overall winner in Research, Prof Sonto Maputle. (second from left).



The best overall winners Adv Gideon Joubert in the category Teaching and Learning (far left) and Agnes Mathaulula in the category Community Engagement (second from right).

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# Geared to deal with postgraduates' problems

“Because of the quality of student leadership at Univen, we pride ourselves on a very stable campus with an excellent academic offering,” says Univen’s Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatl.

Receiving a report on postgraduate students’ grievances recently, Mbatl said Univen’s management was committed to the implementation of the recommendations, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

The task team was chaired by retired Vice Chancellor, Prof Marcus Balitulo and included Adv Ramashia and Attorney Ndou. Also present at the presentation was Student Representative Council President, Mashudu Nthulane and the Chairperson of Postgraduate Students, Nigel Thobejane.

The investigating team was constituted following grievances received from a group of postgraduate students in October 2015. Univen management established an independent body to investigate the allegations made and report with recommendations to address the concerns. The members were assisted by the Director of Legal Services.

“The university encouraged participants to provide information,” said Balitulo. “Whilst a number of challenges were identified, the report also highlighted very good things that Univen continues to do. Some of the allegations were baseless as no evidence was forthcoming and had to be dismissed.

“Some of the problems experienced were a mirror of what has been happening

in broader society like xenophobic, race and gender issues.

“There was a reservoir of goodwill to find sustainable solutions from the university community, including the complainants. It was important to take advantage of the goodwill to deal with the problems,” said Balitulo.



Prof Balitulo handing the report to Prof Mbatl.



From the horses mouth – from left, Prof Balitulo, Mr Nigel Thobejane and SRC President, Mashudu Nthulane receiving the report.

# Univen alumna completes masters in the USA



Univen alumna, Samukezi Ngubane, has graduated with a master’s degree in Women and Gender Studies at the San Francisco State University in the USA.

Her studies were financed by a Fulbright Scholarship, a programme for young foreign professionals who want to conduct research in the USA.

Ngubane obtained a BA and a BA honours in International Relations at the University of Venda in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

“When I received the news that I was awarded the Fulbright Scholarship I was over the moon. My first thought was that I am going to the United States, thinking I have never ever imagined going abroad. I had not totally grasped what I was really getting myself into, and it was a beautifully painful ride. I was fortunate to be in a state and city which is so diverse, allowing me to fully experience different cultures.

“San Francisco is a beautiful city, with people from all walks of life. It could have been so easy for me to



feel like a ‘foreigner’, but because of its diversity I felt like one of the San Franciscans,” says Ngubane.

“I was even more fortunate to be part of the Women and Gender Studies Department at San Francisco State University, one of the very first departments of its kind in the United States. The department was forged out of activism and scholarship. It introduced and helped me negotiate praxis. The social justice, social movement and community engagement work that I have been doing got definition from the different courses I took. I understood how often theory might fail to translate into practice, and realised there cannot be theory without practice, and vice versa. Theory and practice are interconnected, and it is in my two-year study that I got to understand the connection. The Women and Gender Studies programme further helped me understand the intersectionality of gender, race, class, sexuality and the nation and the structures of power that perpetuate differences.

“I had a wonderful academic experience. My professors were beyond patient and understanding. One thing I learned was that it is okay to say you are struggling and reach out for help. I am grateful I was surrounded by very smart, compassionate, understanding and very flexible professors. Not only did I receive assistance, I also received a lot of help from the Student Health Center, the Counselling Services and the Student Success Program. These were resources that are available for both local and international students, but of course, to get access to them one needs to reach out and seek help. It is not solely out of my own will that I was able to complete my masters in record time - it was everyone else who believed in me, and went out



of their way for me to succeed. I will forever be grateful to San Francisco State University and the Women and Gender Studies Department.

“I gained great and invaluable skills. I grew academically, but also as an activist. I got to establish my interests, and became more of a critical thinker, being aware of the spaces I occupy and those that my body cannot occupy. Pedagogically, I appreciated the US education system that I was not familiar with. Being so much used to what Paulo Freire calls the ‘banking model’, (where students are just recipients waiting to be ‘filled’ with knowledge by their teachers), being in a different environment that encouraged me to think, engage in dialogues and facilitate was liberating. I remember telling my professors that as much as the US education system is rigorous, it is the only great thing I am taking back with me.

“If I had one piece of advice to give to any prospect Fulbrighter - please do not spend so much time at the library. Try and find a balance, explore your surroundings, make friends, connect with other Fulbrighters and get involved in campus activities. I realised when I had one semester left before completing my studies that all I know about in San Francisco is my department, library, grocery store and my place. Do not make the same mistake. I am forever grateful to Fulbright and the University of Venda for

# The wrath of not applying in time

“Speaking from a broken heart, I never thought I would find myself having a gap year and end up at home doing nothing.”

These words come from Mukhethwa Magalela, a young girl who was in the class of 2015 and failed to get admission from Univen because she did not apply in time.

In 2016 the university was consistent when it comes to admission - only those who applied in time were given first preference. Those who did not apply, like Mukhethwa, were queuing outside the main gate, hoping to get late admission, but to no avail.

“I never thought it would be possible for me not to get admitted because I am a bright girl and I knew am going to pass with flying colours and it would be easy for me to get admission,” she says.

University application should be taken very seriously as it can hinder the success of young people who wish to further their studies at any higher learning institution.

“Having to do nothing for the whole year is mind demolishing as well as exhausting. When I think it will be like this for the whole year, I really get depressed,” she says.

“If it were not for my supportive mother, I might have committed suicide. I felt so useless and that grew even worse when my peers came back for the holidays. I felt like I did not belong, or I am misplaced, as my friends came back from higher learning institutions and there I was undertaking zero.”

What happened to Mukhwethwa should not happen to anyone. Grade 12 learners should see applying for next year as a priority because if they don’t apply, they will waste a precious year doing nothing.

“I have already applied for 2017 admission as I do not want to repeat what happened this year,” says Mukhwethwa.

Students who intend to enrol at the University of Venda for the 2017 academic year should note that application for admissions and hostel accommodation is currently underway and the closing date is Friday, 30 September 2016.

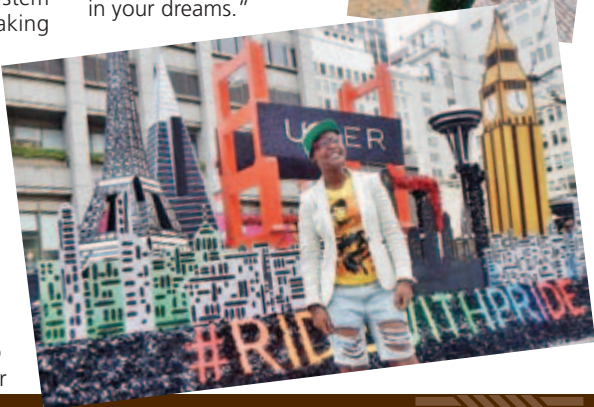
Applications should be directed to The University Registrar, University of Venda, Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou, 0950.

Application forms can be downloaded at [www.univen.ac.za](http://www.univen.ac.za).

For enquiries contact Seth Ugoda on tel 015 962 8882.

awarding me the opportunity to go out there and learn about the world from a different perspective, learn about other cultures, and mostly learn about myself.

“The experience in the US has been really humbling, and I definitely did not come back the same way I left. I am more than happy and willing to help where needed, share my experiences and engage in projects that will be instrumental and facilitate change in social justice. Just a reminder to other students - nothing is impossible, sometimes passion and a dream is all you need to make things happen. Where you come from definitely does not determine where you are headed. Believe in yourself and in your dreams.”





# Mandela Day at Thinashaka

*“There can be no keener revelation of society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.” - Nelson Mandela.*

Univen’s Campus Health staff and peer educators spent Mandela Day 2016 at the Thinashaka Secondary School in Tshivhilwi Village to honour the icon with community service for 67 minutes. The programme was opened with the national anthem with the school principal, Mr Nekhavhambe, welcoming everybody to the historic day. “Make the best of the day in honouring the legend, Nelson Mandela, on his birthday.” The chairperson of the peer educators, Mr Maduwa said educators would give health talks to students

and help clean the school with a peer educator assisting in every class. In class discussions with grade 11 and 12 learners, alcohol and drug abuse and sexually transmitted infections, among others, were discussed. The possible causes were identified as peer pressure, family problems, stress and entertainment needs. Community outreach of this nature empowers and benefits the community and changes people’s lives for the better.



*“Together we benefit” - Peer educators and Thinashaka Secondary School learners.*



## Challenges of women in research in higher education

“Women are often the product of unequal, gendered education before we reach higher education. As we enter higher education, we find relatively few mentors who are experienced (senior female academics) because in the past opportunities for female academics were more limited than they are today.” This is according to Prof Carol Mershon of the Department of Politics at the University of Virginia in the USA. Delivering a public lecture ‘Advancing women in research in higher education’ at Univen recently, Mershon said that one of the major challenges is the inequality between men and women in terms of academic careers. “Women who have academic male partners tend to struggle, as the male partners think their careers come first and those of female partners come second. As women we struggle to master the time, energy and effort to devote to our academic research as we start from the inequalities often

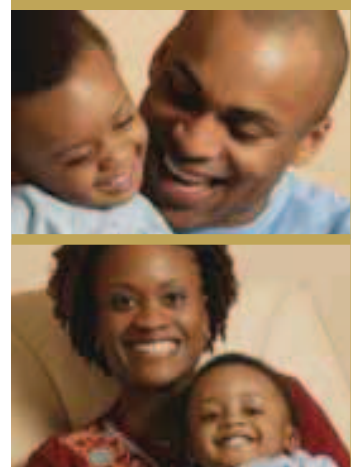
faced at home and move to the challenges we face at work.” Hosted by Univen’s School of Human and Social Sciences, Mershon said women should reflect on the challenges which they are currently facing in terms of research in South Africa. “In the workplace we often encounter what social psychologists call implicit bias. This is a bias against women that our male colleagues, our students - both female and male - may or may not express openly, but nonetheless is expressed at work.” The lecture was also aimed at bringing unity among women to assist to succeed academically. One of the solutions was collaboration in research. Women should unite when conducting research in the male-dominated industry. Researchers should form reading groups to discuss scholarly works. The choice of themes and the work to be discussed should be decided consensually to help members to prepare for research.

## RUFORUM visits Univen

The Deputy Secretary-General of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture – RUFORUM - Dr Moses Osiru of RUFORUM, visited Univen recently. He presented to the School of Agriculture opportunities by RUFORUM for capacity development and grants available for postgraduate studies. Univen’s involvement in the biennial conference of the organisation which will be held in Stellenbosch from 17 to 21 October, was also discussed, focusing on a possible side event on fostering university community engagement for rural transformation. Univen’s Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbati, serves on the RUFORUM executive board. Visit <http://www.ruforum.org/about-competitive-grants-system> and <https://blog.ruforum.org/tag/biennial-conference/>.



*Opportunities from RUFORUM - students and staff of the School of Agriculture who participated in the presentation.*



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University of Venda



# Vuwani Science Resource Centre an asset to communities

"As a nation we cannot allow our kids who were born in the 90s to blame apartheid - something which happened before they were even born. We can only achieve that by working together to make their future look brighter," says the Operational Manager of the Univen Foundation, Dr Lufuno Kone.

Kone spoke during a visit to Univen by Nissan South Africa, which has invested more than R1 million in the Vuwani Science Resource Centre.

"We must provide experiences in science that are entertaining, interactive, first-hand, accessible, relevant, understandable and strive to identify and meet the needs of the community in its full diversity," said the centre's Prof Vaith Sankaran.

"The centre works smoothly through the support we continuously receive from Nissan South Africa. We offer short courses with certificates issued to participants. We also visit secondary schools around Limpopo, including the Thengwe and Mbilwi

secondary schools. Some of the schools visit the centre to do experiments."

In 2004 the Department of Science and Technology identified the Vuwani Science Resource Centre's potential to grow as a rural science centre.

"We feel grateful that our efforts have not gone to waste and we feel proud to be part of the centre," said the Manager Corporate Social Responsibility and Transformation at Nissan, Keba Mathlako.

"When it comes to raising funds, I will consult with Nissan and come up with some ideas on how we can assist so that the centre can run smoothly. "

Kone said they are working on a proposal regarding disabled students on the Univen campus – the South African university with the highest number of registered disabled students.

***"Don't allow our kids to blame apartheid for something which happened before they were born" – Kone.***



## Winter school a winner in Limpopo

More than a hundred grade 11 and 12 learners from various high schools in Limpopo recently attended the 2016 two weeks' winter school programme organised by Univen's School of Education.

"These lecturers know what they are doing. They make learning maths fun and simple," said Abigail Manyuwa, a grade 12 learner at the Renaissance Secondary School in Musina.

"I now understand maths better than ever. I now have more knowledge when it comes to accounting and mathematics. The lecturers here made me realise that I still have to study further if I want to get good marks which will enable me to be admitted at the university of my choice next year," said Kwano Ngoben.

Kwano is a grade 12 learner at the Frans Du Toit Secondary School in Phalaborwa.

"The people in Venda are friendly and patient, especially the teachers. I could freely ask questions about things which I didn't understand. I am now a better learner, thanks to the university's winter school programme."

Learners were also given study guides and Univen application forms for the 2017 academic year.

The winter school prepares learners for their upcoming trial examinations, covering almost all the subjects which are taught at schools.

*Learners flock to Univen's winter school.*



## Rural schools benefit from Univen's projects

Univen has donated computers to 30 schools in the Vhembe area.

The project empowers local feeder schools and communities to ensure that even children from deep rural areas get to be computer literate before they reach tertiary level.

"We gave each school eight computers," said Univen's Head of Information Technology Support Services, Nkhumbuleni Ratshitanga.

"We appreciate what the university has done," said the Deputy Principal of Tshivhidzomasiagwala Secondary School, Petros Makhuvha.

"The computers will help our learners as they will be computer literate when they complete their secondary education. This will make it easier for them to do their assignments when they go on to tertiary education. We advise other schools and communities to send us their applications in time for next year, as our aim is to empower all our feeder schools," said Ratshitanga.

## PhD in Rural Development candidate to USA for research fellowship

Hlekani Kabiti, a PhD in Rural Development candidate, is set to join the Kettering Foundation in the USA as a multinational resident research fellow until the end of the year.

She will be based at the foundation's headquarters in Dayton, Ohio. The fellowship offers research opportunities on contemporary topics relating to the roles of citizens, institutions and communities in a democracy.

This opportunity came as a result of Hlekani demonstrating immense academic and leadership potential through her involvement in various Kettering Foundation-hosted activities since 2013.

Among these has been her co-authoring of a book chapter, Amplifying Community Voices in South Africa: Nurturing Transformative Leaders for Rural Development, with Univen's Prof Joseph Francis. The chapter focuses on the rural community-engaged work of the Institute

for Rural Development. It will be published as part of a book which shares seven community engagement practices from universities representing various regions of the world.

As a result of her contribution to the book, she was invited to serve on a discussion panel on youth leadership during the Talloires Network University Leaders Conference held in Stellenbosch.

In July 2015 she participated in a workshop which the foundation organises annually in Dayton, Ohio. The workshop brings together researchers, practitioners, non-governmental organisations, educators and government officials. They discuss possible solutions to common societal issues perceived to be blocking development throughout the world.

Hlekani's participation in the research fellowship will help her acquire relevant skills and competences that will make her a knowledgeable

development practitioner and academic who applies principles of democracy in collective decision-making. Apart from being exposed to various citizen-engaged research practices, she will deepen her workshop facilitation, scientific writing and reviewing skills.

Her association with scholars from the USA and other parts of the world will expand her professional network and sharpen her intercultural competences.

"I am very excited and am looking forward to embarking on the fellowship. Being in a different learning environment will broaden my horizons and perspectives of development practice. I am prepared to face the challenges that come with balancing the fellowship and finalising my thesis. Hopefully, I will come back a better academic and development practitioner," said Kabiti.

• **Nendila wishes Kabiti all the best during her learning expedition in the USA.**

## 2017 Univen applications now open

Students who intend to enrol for programmes of their choice at the University of Venda in the 2017 academic year - application for admissions and hostel accommodation is now open. The closing date is Friday, 30 September 2016. Applications should be directed to:

The University Registrar, University of Venda, Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou, 0950

Application forms can be downloaded from [www.univen.ac.za](http://www.univen.ac.za).

For enquiries please contact Mr Seth Ugoda on 015 962 8882.



# Apply on time - Deputy Minister

The Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mduduzi Manana, experienced first-hand the roll-out of the 2016 Apply Now/Khetha career guidance campaign at three schools in Burgersfort, Limpopo - Dikotope, Moukangoe and Manoke.

Manana was accompanied by student recruitment officers from tertiary institutions in the province, including Univen, as well as funding organisations such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

He interacted with learners from Grade 9 to 12 and promoted the 100 occupations in high demand list released in 2014. The institutions shared their career opportunities with learners in each school.

Manana encouraged learners to apply on time and cautioned them against bogus institutions and apprenticeships and learnerships. Learners and parents were encouraged to double check institutions' registration status with the Department of Higher Education.

"Take your education very seriously - it is only education that you can use as a weapon to fight poverty and unemployment," said Manana.

Univen's Schools Liaison Officer, Takalani Nyelisani, commended efforts by government to remind learners about the importance of applying early as well as applying to as many institutions as possible to give them a wider choice.

"Our learners are very fortunate that information is brought to them from all corners of life, through radio, television, internet, career exhibitions and

open days. However, it is concerning that they do not make efforts to utilise these opportunities. Please take note of the closing date for applications - 30 September," he said.

The Apply Now/Khetha career guidance campaign encourages secondary school learners to apply on time for admission to post-school institutions. By doing so, they avert possible stampedes and long queues that take place at the beginning of each academic year.

The career guidance component of the campaign informs learners about career choices available in the post-school sector. The roll-out of the campaign is targeted at far-flung and often neglected rural areas, villages and townships to ensure that learners in those areas make informed career choices.

The campaign was initiated by government to encourage learners to make early decisions for their career paths as well as applying for their post-school studies on time.

It was motivated by the incident at the University of Johannesburg in 2012, when Thabo Sekwena's mother died during a stampede at the university. Following the incident, the department engaged Thabo as to the reasons why he did not apply on time. Thabo's response was that he was under the impression that he needed to get his matric results first before he could apply. Clearly there are many learners who think like Thabo.

*"Take your education very seriously" - Manana.*



# French-South African Institute on Agriculture visits Univen

The French-South African Institute on Agriculture, led by its deputy director, Catherine Constant, visited Univen recently.

The university is part of the tripartite collaboration between the University of Fort Hare and the University of Limpopo on the institute's project which resides in the Department of Food Science and Technology of Univen's School of Agriculture.

The delegation, including the Scientific Director, Dr Laurence Mioche, presented a proposed multidisciplinary master's degree in Food Science

which will involve one year practical experience in food industries in France and a year taught courses. The target for the curriculum design, approval and rolling out of the programme is 2018/2019.

A local entrepreneur, Khodani Negota of Ndisedzo Farming and Trading, made a presentation on juice processing in Thohoyandou. She hopes to collaborate with the university in the field of practical training to students and capacity building for staff members.



*Exploring cooperation possibilities - Prof Mchau, Dean of the School of Agriculture, Prof Jan Crafford, Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic and Catherine Constant, Deputy Director of the French-South African Institute on Agriculture.*

# Women in Leadership present their manifestos

The University of Venda's women leaders and managers from different departments, centres and schools were awarded with certificates of competence after completing a short course on Women in Leadership recently.

"The university expects women who attended the training to apply for senior positions anywhere in the country and compete with male counterparts who are in senior positions," said the Director of Human Resources, Tshililo Manenzhe.

"Women leaders will take senior positions not by force but by qualifications and hard work", said Dr Thizwilondl Mudau, Senior Lecturer in Gender and Youth Studies.

"Women are capable of doing many things. Women believe that leaders should encourage each other and that leadership is not about power and authority but mostly about inspiring others and bringing out the best in them."

"Women must be strong at all levels because leadership does not come on a silver platter," said Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatl.

"A leader is a servant of the people. It is not about power or how strong you are about serving. The greater you climb in your leadership ambitions, the more of a servant you become. Leadership is a combination of skills. Leaders are not created by chance but by the skills they continue to acquire," said Mbatl.

Women who dreamed of being the future vice chancellors of universities and leaders of the country were given a platform to present their manifestos and share their experiences. The most common factor was that training equipped them with leadership and management skills.

The women leaders believe in leading with integrity, mutual respect and positive values. They are also committed to develop, mentor and coach other aspiring future leaders.

Regardless of family responsibilities and the stereotypical behaviours towards women in leadership, they will inspire and bring change.

The course was initiated by Univen, facilitated by the University of Witwatersrand and sponsored by ETDP SETA.



*A united front - participants in the Women in Leadership workshop.*

# Understanding physics made simpler

"Since the discovery of the Higgs boson in 2012, particle physics now has a complete theory to describe the material world that surrounds us - everything on earth and in all stars and galaxies. But all this visible matter only accounts for five percent of the content of the universe," says Prof Pauline Gagnon, former Senior Research Scientist at Indiana University, USA.

She now conducts research at CERN, Switzerland which boasts the world famous massive Large Hadron Collider and its immense detectors.

Addressing a Univen seminar 'Who cares about particle physics', Gagnon said the rest is called dark matter and dark energy but it remains completely mysterious.

"This is the biggest challenge in particle physics today. It is the quantum excitation of the Higgs field - a fundamental field of crucial importance to particle physics theory. Unlike other known fields such as the electromagnetic field, the Higgs field takes a non-zero constant value almost everywhere. The Higgs boson gives mass to the fundamental particles.

"The early Greek scientists taught that atoms

are the smallest particles of matter. Later it was discovered that atoms, however, are made up of still smaller particles namely protons, neutrons and electrons. Protons and neutrons are formed from yet smaller fundamental particles called quarks.

"Three elements are needed to generate the masses of fundamental particles. These are a mechanism, a field and a boson. To create the Higgs boson, we need to concentrate a huge amount of energy in a small point in space - that's the role of the Large Hadron Collider."

Gagnon is passionate about women in science. Wherever she has gone in South Africa, she has encouraged young women to strive to succeed in sciences.

"We are proud of the student graduates which are being produced by the University of Venda. You all here have big shoes to fill," said Dr Igile Gledhill of the Academy of Science of South Africa.

Gagnon made it possible for all to understand the complex world of particle physics. Many young people who listened to her may be persuaded to pursue a career in particle physics.



*"Describing the material world that surrounds us" - Gagnon.*



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Health Sciences conference a success



**“Stop foetal alcohol spectrum disorders by addressing drinking among pregnant women” – Ingersoll.**

Univen’s 2nd National Health Sciences conference has been hailed as a success.

“Despite the encouraging progress made in reaching the millennium development goals, the world still has not realised positive life outcomes for the majority of people,” said Univen’s Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlali.

Officially opening the conference, Mbatlali said the conference came after the United Nations member states met in 2015 and adopted a set of sustainable development goals to promote sustainable health.

“This conference acknowledges that health is wealth and conference abstracts cover diverse disciplines that directly impact on our health and general wellbeing. My hope and expectation is that topical and developmental issues in health, education, policies, poverty, climate change and environmental sustainability will be rigorously debated. I hope that the School of Health Sciences will consider infusing mental and clinical health in its curriculum,” he said.

The theme of the conference was ‘An agenda for sustainable health: Beyond 2015 millennium goals’. The conference provided an opportunity for academics, practitioners, government stakeholders, non-governmental organisations and community stakeholders to share their research work and discuss the way forward towards achieving sustainable developmental goals.

“Children with foetal alcohol spectrum disorders are more likely to be physically underdeveloped and most of them tend not to do well at school,” said Prof Karen Ingersoll, Clinical Health Psychologist and Professor of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences at the School of Medicine at the University of Virginia in the USA.

“Some may experience significant behavioural, health and mental problems and they tend to die young.”

“Studies found that mothers who gave birth to foetal alcohol spectrum disorders babies had 13 alcoholic drinks per week, with large variation drinks across all trimesters. They were more likely to be rural residents during gestation. A series of studies used active case ascertainment methods in villages, urban areas and schools. I found that the more drinking and binge drinking mothers were reported to be doing, the greater the damage to cognitive behavioural and morphological characteristics of the child.

“To stop foetal alcohol spectrum disorders we must address any drinking among pregnant women. We must reduce drinking to lower risk levels for women who will not use effective contraception every time.

Women who will not reduce drinking must be encouraged to use long reversible contraception,” said Ingersoll.

The Executive Mayor of the Vhembe District Municipality, Tshireke Matibane said the district has 1,3 million people.

“We are the only region in the country which shares borders with three states - Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana. Our geographical location positions us to be the link of the South African economy and other states.

“I am pleased to see Univen creating platforms to engage academics, practitioners, government stakeholders and non-governmental organisations to ensure that health issues move in the right direction.”

He commended home-based carers who are working towards promoting health in the district under difficult conditions.

“The district requires health practitioners who will address geriatric issues, HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, malaria and malnutrition. Researchers and the university must continue to do research which will benefit communities,” he said.

“A lack of appropriately trained doctors and nurses is a significant contributory factor in maternal death,” said Dr Ntoden Ndumato, Head of Clinical Department: Family Medicine of the Department of Health in Limpopo.



**Congratulations are in order – The 2016 2nd National Health Sciences Conference organising team.**



**Senior Prof Base Khoza, Dean of the School of Health Sciences, to consider infusing mental and clinical health in the curriculum.**



**“I am pleased to see Univen engaging academics, practitioners, government stakeholders and non-governmental organisations to ensure that health issues move in the right direction” – Councillor Matibane.**



**“A lack of appropriately trained doctors and nurses is a significant contributory factor to maternal death” - Dr Ndumato.**

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