



Make agriculture cool to attract youth - AU chair

"Institutions of higher learning should develop strategies to reach out to farmers instead of only concentrating on imparting skills to students," said the Chairperson of the African Union, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

Officially opening the RUFORUM Biennial Conference in Cape Town recently, Dlamini-Zuma said institutions should invest in people, particularly the youth.

"It is important to produce enough food so that the youth can be fed properly. This will increase their capacity to learn. Increased use of technology in agriculture will make agriculture cool and attract more youths," she said.

"RUFORUM is doing considerably well to uplift smallholder farmers. Africa should import less processed food, produce more food and sell to the rest of the world. Africa will also not reach its full potential if it is not using the skills which women have. It makes sense to invest in both men and women – a successful man and woman side by side. Men and women together can go far," she said.

Keynote speaker, the President of Mauritius, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, said investing in Africa's people is a crucial step towards the continent reaching its development goals.

"I am convinced that the social and economic transformation of the African continent will happen only when higher education becomes central to the development debate."

Over 850 participants from 74 countries attended the conference, including four ministers of higher education, science and technology, 65 vice chancellors, 120 principals and deans and over 250 masters and PhD students.

Other attendees included the private sector, nongovernmental organisations, farmers, civil society, researchers, science and technology institutions and development partners.

More than seven plenary sessions including the conference thematic areas and 49 parallel sessions were organised. Univen, as one of the co-hosting universities in South Africa, showcased its

community engagement activities.

The conference theme was 'Linking agricultural universities with civil society, the private sector, government and other stakeholders in support of agricultural development in Africa'. The Univen delegation was led by Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlana, who is also a member of the executive committee of RUFORUM.



"Increased use of technology will make agriculture cool and attract more youths" - Dlamini-Zuma.



"The social and economic transformation of Africa will happen only when higher education becomes central to the development debate" - Gurib-Fakim.



A bevy of vice chancellors - Univen's Prof Peter Mbatlana (second from left) with other vice chancellors.



A meeting of minds - Delegates and postgraduate students.

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Universities must strengthen their curriculum and leadership capacity

Some 40 vice chancellors from African universities recently deliberated about strengthening African university leadership and management capacity for higher education and economic transformation of Africa.

The vice chancellors' session was a pre-event for the fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM biennial conference. The theme for this year's conference was 'Linking agricultural universities with civil society, the private sector, governments and other stakeholders in support of agricultural development in Africa'.

The key points from presentations and discussions were leadership experience of the participants, sparking change in institutional management for Africa's development and the challenges, the new world of work that we have to manage, guiding student-centred learning, challenges and opportunities in university design, leadership in the university environment and how to ensure engagement within the university system.

Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatia, shared the best practice which Univen had adopted such as in-house higher education leadership modules for staff and a student leadership development model.

Having been a successful scientist, deputy vice chancellor, deputy minister and minister of education in Kenya and a successful farmer, Dr Margaret Kamar provided insights into leadership that can help improve the performance of higher education institutions in Africa.

"To transform Africa, the food security question must be answered as it is the first basic requisite before economic growth. African graduates are among the best, but regrettably, we are not transforming the best brains to be of the best benefits on the continent. How does Africa raise the graduates to exploit the available natural resources? There is a need to develop policies and programmes that will lead to effective capacity development in our institutions."

"We need to reflect on how to bring the government to follow universities as there is a gap between the two entities. Universities should find an opportunity to fill this space, otherwise nongovernmental organisations and private companies will do so.

"Universities must position themselves to meet the global, continental and national development frameworks. These frameworks cannot be achieved without universities. Define the purpose and niche that makes your university unique," she said.

As a resolution, the vice chancellors formed Team economic transformation in Africa as a platform that brings together African universities' leaders and managers to champion economic development in Africa. This platform will be used for continuous sharing of information, lessons and best practices in leadership to ensure that the universities are contributing to economic development on the continent. Universities are encouraged to adopt collaborative efforts to deal with the resources ordeal.

Deans and senior academics engaged to address concerns over the poor quality of students' output and research products that are in some cases disjointed to the needs of the industry.

The quality of students, curriculum and research output in agriculture remains a central focus for RUFORUM. African universities and research institutes considered various issues enabling agriculture to play a strategic role in economic development on the continent. Massification of undergraduate programmes has been identified as suffocating the research output of graduate programmes. Research supervisors are seen as not giving enough time to students, resulting in many abstracts having to be re-written.

In a skype connection, Prof Calestous Juma of the Practice of International Development at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, said the pressure for reform is mounting.



"Univen has adopted in-house higher education leadership modules" – Mbatia.

"The state and corporate sector demand that these institutions must play an important role in improving economic growth. Whilst employers require employable graduates, there are too many graduates being produced, but very few are employable. In performing their teaching role, universities should address the needs of the employers."

He said these institutions are continually facing challenges for funding of higher education by governments.

"There are high expectations from the industry on the quality of graduates and these are sometimes not aligned. Such a mismatch should

be resolved through practical exposure during training," he said.

"Similarly, deans are under pressure to add additional headcounts in student enrolments, despite the lack of physical infrastructure. There exists a definite link between agriculture and economy and African institutions must transform agricultural systems in a sustainable way."

As a result of these pressures, universities were encouraged to review their curriculum implementation and develop strategies for effective implementation in Africa. Furthermore, they should develop a collaborative framework in which they can share the model for success.



"Africa's food security question is paramount for economic growth" – Kamar.



Absorbing information – Univen's Prof Godwin Mchau.



Setting the tone - RUFORUM Board Chair Prof Mabel Opanda Imbuga.



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University of Venda

1st Limpopo research seminar to be an annual event

"It is essential to bridge the gap between academic institutions and the government," said Limpopo's MEC of Roads and Public Infrastructure, Jerry Ndou. Officially opening the 1st Limpopo research seminar, Ndou highlighted the need for academia in implementing the Limpopo Development Plan 2015-2019.

"The essence of this plan is to reduce poverty, fight unemployment and reduce the unacceptable levels of inequality. We aim to achieve this through sustainable economic and social development and transformation."

The Limpopo Government, with the Universities of Venda and Limpopo, recently hosted the two-day research seminar at Univen's Research Conference Centre.

Themed 'Enhancing research collaboration, engagement and innovation in Limpopo Province: bridging the gap between academia and the public sector', the aim was to offer researchers a platform to share ideas, experiences and research trends. The seminar outcomes included the development of a conducive environment for the establishment of the Limpopo Provincial Research and Skills Development Hub. The hub will focus on research that is relevant to the government sector.

"The hub will use available expertise in local universities and ensure that preference is extended to universities in the province," said the Director of Research and Development in the Office of the Premier, Joyce Mokobi.

"There is a dire need to forge partnerships and collaborations with academic and research institutions through provincial research and skills development," she said.

"Univen is open for research collaboration to contribute to enhanced values obtained from inter-disciplinary and collaboration research," said Univen's Registrar, Prof Edward Nesamvuni.

"The University of Limpopo also pledged support through joint research to benefit the people of Limpopo - more significantly, to align the university's research endeavours with the research strategy of the provincial government."

"Univen's research output has grown as we are committed to doing research," said Prof Georges-Ivo Ekosse, Director of Research and Innovation.

"We do not want to see our people continue living in poverty, hence Univen and the University of Limpopo are collaborating."

Discussions challenged all organisations to rethink their roles towards contributing to the socio-economic development of Limpopo using research, development and innovation as a developmental tool. Issues highlighted the need for a paradigm shift on how the provincial government and academic and research institutions should engage on research, development and innovation. This could improve the lives of the citizenry through socio-economic development. A greater emphasis was put on the ability and willingness of the Limpopo government to partner and collaborate with academic and research institutions. Such collaboration will curb challenges faced by the province.



"Reduce poverty, the unacceptable levels of inequality and fight unemployment" - Ndou.



"Univen is open for research collaboration" - Nesamvuni.



"A programme of action is essential to ensure resource allocation" - Nchabeleng.

During the networking session, the Acting Director General of Limpopo Provincial Government, Nape Nchabeleng, said there was a gap which should be bridged through a strategic partnership on research, engagement and innovation between the public sector and academia.

"We need a rational commitment through a programme of action to ensure appropriate resource allocation, the dissemination of research findings and pursuing evidence-based research. We should not fall into a rut of narrow pragmatism and short-term goals", said Nchabeleng.

Resolutions taken included that universities and research institutions should align with the Limpopo Development Plan and the provincial research agenda. Government departments, municipalities, universities and research institutions should also intensify their research collaboration, particularly in

identified provincial and municipality priorities.

Stakeholders included the South African Medical Research Council, the Agricultural Research Council, the Human Sciences Research Council, the National Research Foundation, Statistics South Africa and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

Other stakeholders were the Water Research Commission, the Department of Science and Technology, the Gauteng Provincial Government, North-West and Mpumalanga Provincial Governments and the KwaZulu-Natal Social Development Department. It also included the Durban University of Technology, Univen, the University of Limpopo, the Limpopo Tourism Agency, the Limpopo Research Forum, including TVETs, sector departments and municipalities.



"Committing to research led to Univen's increased research output" - Georges-Ivo Ekosse.



Viewing poster presentations – Univen's Prof Ekosse, Councillor Tshifhango, MEC Ndou, Acting Director General of Limpopo Nape Nchabeleng and Univen's Prof Bessong.

Muleya presents at Massachusetts conference

Nqobile Muleya, a first year PhD student in Applied Mathematics, received an excellent paper award in the research category at a recent conference in Boston, Massachusetts in the USA.

Muleya, studying under the supervision of Profs Garira and Mchau, presented on 'Multi-scale modelling of citrus black spot transmission dynamics along the pre-harvest supply chain'. His objective was to synthesise mathematical modelling as an indispensable.

The five-day conference was in line with globalisation of the education for research scholars from different regions.

"I have learnt that attending a conference is a professionally rewarding experience," said Muleya.

"In addition to socialising with colleagues from other institutions and a trip to a possibly exotic locale, the two main reasons to attend a conference are to hear presentations and to converse with other researchers. Listening to presentations will inform you of what others are doing, will inspire research ideas of your own, and will expose you to different styles of presentation."



Munsaka overall best student presenter at international conference

Charity Munsaka, a first-year master of rural development student, received two awards - Best Student Presenter under the conference theme Law, Commerce and Governance and Best Overall Student Presenter at the recent Univen-Walter Sisulu University international research conference.

This feat only goes to confirm that indeed the School of Agriculture is on the right track – becoming a Centre of Excellence. Congratulations to Charity, her supervisors and the Institute for Rural Development on this significant achievement.

Awarding a winner - Charity Munsaka receives two awards from Prof Stella Anyangwe, former World Health Organization country representative in Mali, Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia.



Welcoming delegates to the international research conference

The Vice Chancellors of Univen, Prof Peter Mbatia, and the Walter Sisulu University, Rob Midgeley, recently welcomed international delegates to the 2nd Univen-WSU Research Conference.

Prof Idowu Olayinka, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, encouraged participants to collaborate and leverage on existing institutional partnerships.

He thanked Univen and the Walter Sisulu University for partnering with the University of Ibadan.

Prof David Norris, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation of the Botswana International University of Science and Technology, said that Univen is closer to his university than most universities in South Africa.

Prof Coetser Adriaan of the Walter Sisulu University said that collaboration should start with faculty leaders and academics.

Prof Dr Alex Engel, Dean of Social Work and the Build Environment of the University of Applied Science and Art Hildesheim, Holzminden and Goettingen in Germany, remarked on the excellent quality of the research presented at the conference.

Univen's Director of Research and Innovation, Prof Georges-Ivo Ekosse, said the value of friendship and trust is the basis of collaboration.

Univen's Director of International Relations, Cornelius Hagenmeier said the value of capacity-building in Africa was excellent.



Prof Idowu Olayinka, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and Prof David Norris, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation of the Botswana International University of Science and Technology, Botswana, share their views on the value of research collaboration.



Dean Prof Alexandra Engel of HAWK University, speaks to attendees.



Time to share experiences.

Maswanganyi enrolling for a PhD

After graduating with a master's degree during Univen's September graduation, Joe Maswanganyi, who is also a member of Parliament, is now enrolling for a PhD in Political Science with Univen for 2017.

"I have a strong passion for education," says Maswanganyi.

"I feel great to have graduated with a master's degree in Political Science from Univen. It is a major highlight of my life. Putting two hours aside to study daily is what helped me to complete my masters.

"There is nothing that can substitute hard work. I would like to encourage young people to study very hard. There is no short cut to success."

Despite having worked hard to graduate with distinctions, Maswanganyi acknowledged the support from the Dean of School of Human and Social Sciences, Prof Mokgale Makgopa, supervisors, Prof Rachidi Molapo, Prof Masoga and the entire leadership of Univen.

"The global village and the society that we live in today needs skilled people. I believe that as South Africa, we should invest more in the knowledge economy. Countries which are developed, have invested a lot in creating new knowledge and innovations", said Maswanganyi.

"As a continent, Africa must be at the forefront of knowledge production. Government and institutions of higher learning should invest more in research and development. Young people should note that their peers in other parts of the world are excelling academically. Those young people will end up occupying strategic positions in multilateral organisations like the African Union and the United Nations and will influence the agendas of these organisations."



Farewell Dr Zaaiman

Univen's senior managers bid farewell to the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations, Dr Jannie Zaaiman recently. Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatl, commended Dr Zaaiman for the excellent leadership he provided in the Operations Division, where he was charged with the responsibilities of overseeing information and communication technology, facilities, human resources, finance, safety and security, as well as the Univen Innovative Growth Company.

"Having worked with Dr Zaaiman for the past eight years, it is easy to see that he has been an important partner in the development of Univen," said Mbatl.

Zaaiman was described as a dependable colleague with tons of purposeful, progressive energy towards the university business.

"I am really sad to leave Univen," said Zaaiman.

"When I was interviewed in 2008 I never even remotely thought that I would be successful in my application. I also never realised how connected I would be to such a warm community of people.

"Thank you to the Senior Management Committee for the wonderful working relationships as well as friendships that have developed over the past years. Working here each day has made me a more complete and well-rounded person.

"Walking a tough road has made Univen proud among all South Africans, showing that a rural university can become a success story. Teamwork and unity among employees, including members of senior management, is essential.

"My wish for everyone is that you all continue to experience success, to feel fulfilled in all you do, and to have nothing but pleasant results with each completed Univen project."



"Dr Zaaiman has been an important partner in the development of Univen" - Mbatl.



Go well Jannie.



Dr Makatu elected to South African Young Academy of Science

Univen's Dr Makondelele Makatu, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, was elected to the executive committee of the South African Young Academy of Science.

She is one of the five elected members who are dedicated to serve for 2016/2017.

The academy is the voice of young scientists in South Africa. It contributes to solutions to national and global challenges facing society and provides a platform for young scientists to influence policy decisions. It also contributes towards the development of scientific capacity in South Africa by mentoring and role-modelling of future scientists and foster opportunities for interdisciplinary collaborations among young scientists.

Univen takes information to the people

Ndivhuwo Mukwevho

More than 80 grade 12 learners from Ha-Mabidi and surrounding villages recently attended a career exhibition at the Mabidi Sports Ground.

The exhibition was organised by Chief Mahandana Mabidi, in collaboration with Univen, to create a platform to interact with learners and unemployed youth for skills development and entrepreneurship. The event was also attended by the ETD-PSETA, the Services SETA, the Bank SETA, NYDA, SANRAL and the UICG.

"As a young person you must make books your best friend," said Chief Mabidi.

"Do not smoke and drink because of peer pressure, as it will not take you anywhere in life. Go study and make me proud – you are the ones who have the potential powers to develop this country. You must stay away from negative influences as education is more important than anything else."

The ETD-PSETA representative, Tsakani Malongete, said various funding opportunities are offered by the Seta and explained how learners can apply to be funded.

"We have a high number of dropouts among the youth, hence we are doing all we can to assist them with funding. There is a need for career guidance at schools as learners still lack knowledge about funding opportunities."

"When you submit application forms, make sure that you have attached all the required documents and do this on time as we are approaching the closing date," said Univen's Assistant Schools Liaison Officer, Justice Lebopa.

"What the chief and the University of Venda have done for us is out of this world," said Nicoline Ramulifho, a grade 12 learner at John Mutheiwana Secondary School.

"We are very lucky to have people who value the importance of our education and development. I will return an application form to the University of Venda before the closing date as I want to study nursing next year."

Service-SETA Provisional Officer, Michael Mbambale, urged learners to utilise the opportunities which are being offered by the organisation.

"All our bursaries assist to further learners' education at tertiary institutions. We are here to help in every way we can."

"Through Univen's Innovative Growth Company one can now study without even having a grade 12 certificate," said the university's Dr Thakhani Takalani.

"The centre has been introduced to equip previously disadvantaged communities with skills. The certificate courses on skills development programmes look exactly the same as those of people doing degrees at Univen," he said.

"There is a difference between a job and a career," said the national Youth Development Agency's Clara Ramogopa.

"Before you choose a career path you must know your personality, as our personalities differ."



"Ensure that all your enrolment documentation is correct" - Assistant Schools Liaison Officer, Justice Lebopa.



"You must make books your best friend" - Chief Mabidi (middle).

Netshifhefhe to serve on SAAIR executive committee

Univen's Head of Quality Assurance, Lufuno Netshifhefhe, has been elected to the executive committee of the Southern African Association for Institutional Research.

This voluntary association is a forum for the interchange of ideas, experiences and best practice for institutional research at higher education institutions in Southern Africa. It plays a vital role to improve the quality of information and decision-making.



Warwick in Africa 2016

The 2016 edition of Warwick in Africa has been launched.

This international community engagement project is an initiative of the University of Warwick, the Vhembe District Department of Education and Univen. Students of the University of Warwick worked with students of Univen's School of Education to support Mathematics and English education in three high schools in the Vuwani area. The schools are Kolokoshani, Ratshikwekwete and Edison Nesengani High Schools, close to the Vuwani Science Resource Centre.

The students are placed in the schools for the second semester module in teaching practice.

The integration of the team ensures that the participating Univen students gain international exposure and intercultural competencies.

The programme, which is coordinated by the Directorates of International Relations and Community Engagement, the Schools of Education, Mathematical and Natural Sciences and the Vuwani Science Resource Centre, commenced with an orientation session. Students were joined by exchange students from the Botho University in Botswana and the masterclass teachers.

The Deputy Director of Quality Assurance in the Vhembe District Department of Education, Mr Munzhelele, introduced basic education in the

Vhembe District. Dr Netshisaulu of the Univen MER Mathivha Centre for African Languages, Arts and Culture, inducted the audience to culture and language in the region.

The Warwick in Africa masterclass programme was also implemented. A four-day workshop for 100 lead Mathematics and English teachers from the Vhembe District was facilitated by teachers from the UK. Prof Colyn Sparrow, Director of the Warwick in Africa Programme, sketched the framework of the initiative.

Addressing basic education - Mr Munzhelele of the Vhembe District's Department of Education.



Welcome to Africa – Univen's Prof Sankaran welcomes the British student team teachers.



Engaging with the Thohoyandou Technical High School - the Warwick in Africa master class teachers.



Learners, Chief Mabidi and ETDP-SETA representatives, Warwick volunteers and Mr Mathebe of UNIVEN at Vuwani Science Resources Centre.



Prof Phaswana-Mafuya appointed to Council of Academy of Science of South Africa

A University of Venda Council member, Prof Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya, has been appointed to the Council of the Academy of Science of South Africa. The four-year term is until 31 December 2020. She has also been appointed on the research output sub-panels for the evaluation of scholarly books and conference proceedings. The sub-panels are overseen by the Department of Higher Education and Training Research Output Panel. They evaluate books and conference proceedings. This ensures

that all approved publications meet the technical and quality requirements for subsidy allocation. These requirements are published in the policy and procedures for Measurement of Research Output of Public Higher Education Institutions of 2003.

"We are confident that Prof Phaswana-Mafuya's expertise and leadership will contribute significantly in promoting the objectives of the academy", said Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbati.

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