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Creating future leaders

Dr Bernard Nthambeleni to continue steering UNIVEN to greater Heights



Dr Nthambeleni will continue to steer UNIVEN to higher heights. The contract was renewed after the University Council consulted with various constituencies.

Dr Nthambeleni's first term as Vice-Chancellor and Principal was from January 2019 to December 2023. During this period, he has transformed UNIVEN into the best University with significant achievements. He steered massive infrastructure development that has changed the face and landscape of the university. The Chair of Council further said the renewal of the Vice-Chancellor's contract will ensure that the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 objectives are implemented most effectively.

At its ordinary meeting held on Friday, 23 June 2023, the University of Venda Council unanimously agreed to extend the employment contract of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni. The Chairperson of Council, Mr Juneas Lekgetha said he is pleased to announce that the University of Venda Council has renewed Dr Bernard Nthambeleni's contract for another 5 years, from January 2024 to December 2028. This implies that

Under the leadership of Dr Bernard Nthambeleni as the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, the University of Venda has made significant strides. When he commenced his tenure, Dr Nthambeleni made it explicit that he would like to position the University of Venda for impact and relevance. Through regular media monitoring reports, it is evident that Dr Nthambeleni has done considerably well in terms of accentuation of the University's visibility which culminated in

the promotion of the University's image and subsequent ranking of the University in the top 15 universities in South Africa by Times Higher Education World Rankings.

In the past 54 months, Dr Nthambeleni did a sterling job, of ensuring the University's financial sustainability. He steered the University through a period of structural reorganization and ensured rebranding efforts which coincided with the University's 40th Anniversary celebrations in 2022. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal acted at all times with integrity and with the University's best interests at heart. Undoubtedly, the University of Venda is far better than it was in 2019.

The University Community looks forward to Dr Nthambeleni's focused leadership as he takes the University to higher heights.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni says he is humbled by the confidence shown by the University Council in his leadership and looks forward to continuing to lead the University of Venda to be a world-class comprehensive institution of higher learning.

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) ranks among the top 11 universities in Sub Saharan Africa



The University of Venda (UNIVEN) was ranked among the Top 11 from a group of 88 universities in Sub-Saharan Africa universities by the 2023 Times Higher Education (THE) Sub-Saharan Africa University Rankings. The official announcement was done at the Times Higher Education Sub-Saharan Universities Forum at Ashesi University in Berekuso, Ghana on 26 June 2023.

The Times Higher Education Sub-Saharan Africa University Rankings is a new university ranking developed specifically to address the challenges faced by higher education institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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The University of Venda (UNIVEN) ranks among the top 11 universities in Sub Saharan Africa cont...

The adjudication process for the 2023 Times Higher Education Sub-Saharan Africa University rankings followed a hybrid methodology to account for the diverse strengths of the sector with a comprehensive range of performance indicators across five pillars: Access and fairness; Africa impact; Teaching skills; Student Engagement and Resources and finances.

The ranking explored the impact of the universities in addressing the toughest challenges encountered in Africa, such as graduate employability, teaching quality, research impact and inequality. The current performance of ranked universities was assessed to identify key areas where they can improve. The importance of university rankings as a tool, provides a way to compare institutions, benchmark performance, identify areas for improvement, and promote a culture of excellence. This ensures that higher education is accessible, affordable, and of the highest quality. Last year, in October 2022, UNIVEN was ranked in the Top 15 universities in South Africa by the Times Higher Education University ranking in its annual ranking of the world's top universities for 2023.



Dr Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UNIVEN said, 'I am elated about this outcome which is a testament to the hard work by management and the academic staff of the University. This achievement will further propel us to do more in those special categories. Kudos to the University community and our governing structures on this achievement.'

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UNIVEN Student is one of the Mail & Guardian's 200 Young South Africans of 2023



As the country is celebrating youth month, A 20-year-old student at the University of Venda, Fhulufhelo Muvhali is one of the Mail and Guardian's 200 Young South Africans of 2023, who received an award in the category of Education. The results were announced at a gala dinner Last week Thursday, 22 June 2023 at The Focus Rooms in Modderfontein.

"This is one of my proudest moments as a young achiever, I believe in doing good for other people, so I dedicate this award to my community. The award serves as an encouragement to continue driving impact in my community and I am proud that my mother has lived to witness my prosperity in the Lord's work", she says.

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Fhulufhelo is the founder of a non-profit organization called The Child Upliftment Corner Foundation. The Foundation's work is based on improving language proficiency in children by providing learning resources such as books.

Ms Muvhali is finishing her Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture.

She says she would not have been where she is today if it was not for her supportive mother, Ms Ntakadzeni Muvhali and her mentors Professor Vhonani Netshandama and Nakisani Nematodzi from the University of Venda Community Engagement Directorate.

She also thanked everyone who believed and supported her dreams to drive impact in her community. She wishes that the Department of Basic Education would collaborate with independent stakeholders like herself to better the situation of education in public schools in rural areas. Fhulufhelo said "In the next five years, I wish South Africa should change its language policies for learners in primary schools. South Africa should have platforms that recognise Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners as the biggest contributors to education. Schools in rural areas should not lack access to reading resources and educational opportunities."

Earlier this year (2023), she was invited to speak at World Literacy Summit in the United Kingdom.

Fhulufhelo Muvhali was born and bred in Thohoyandou, and it has been just over three years since she matriculated from Mbilwi secondary school, yet this dynamic changemaker has made a huge difference in the lives of many learners through her non-profit organization. In her matric year (2019), Fhulufhelo was awarded a bronze award from the De Beers English Olympiad. She was disheartened by the low participation of children from her school and that is when she discovered her mission.

In (2021) she became an ambassador for the Global Changemakers Organisation and the World Literacy Foundation, later that year, she established her non-profit organisation, The Child Upliftment Corner Foundation. It is aimed at improving mother-tongue language proficiency in children by ensuring that primary schools in rural

areas of Thohoyandou have access to reading resources. "We all know that a lot of public schools in rural areas have been experiencing a shortage of learning resources and this has resulted in a lot of illiterate learners," added Ms Muvhali.

Through her community outreach activities, Fhulufhelo has helped numerous matriculants by ensuring that they have access to learning resources such as laptops, data, calculators and study guides. Being a two-time awardee at the Eskom Science Expo for Young Scientists, she was invited to volunteer as a judge and mentor learners. In (2022), Fhulufhelo was selected to be part of a model-United simulation in Turkey. She also graduated from the Trevor Noah Education Changemakers programme, cohort 2, and returned to her community to partner with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, ShoutSa, Literacy4life, University of Venda and the Limpopo Department of Education to build a literacy hub at Mamali Sikhwivhilu primary school with over 500 children story books in Tshivenda and English.

There have been circumstances where Fhulufhelo experienced failure in life and felt demotivated. In March 2022, she enrolled in a leadership course at Aspire Institute funded by Harvard Business School, however, due to certain circumstances, she failed and was kicked out of the programme. Nonetheless, she was eager to try again this year and she is currently enrolled in the programme. This teaches one to never give up but rather learn from their mistakes.

Prof Crafford leaves UNIVEN with a remarkable legacy

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, Prof Jan Crafford is leaving the University with a big bang. His farewell function took place a night just after the announcement of the University of Venda (UNIVEN) being ranked among the Top 11 from a group of 88 universities in Sub-Saharan Africa universities by the 2023 Times Higher Education (THE) Sub-Saharan Africa University Rankings.



The Senior Management Committee bid farewell to Prof Jan Crafford fractionally known as 'Dzulani,' who served the University for 23 years. The function was held at the Skukuza Golf Club on 29 June 2023. Prof Crafford is leaving a remarkable legacy and was described by all speakers as a humble, honest, and ethical person.



As she welcomes the audience, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Nosisi Feza boldly indicated that UNIVEN is becoming a giant, referring to UNIVEN's recent ranking at number 11 by the 2023 Times Higher Education (THE). She said the farewell function was meant to be an excellent day in honour of Prof Crafford. Prof Feza highlighted that this year the University achieved a lot and that should be celebrated. She urged senior managers to support each other in the development of the University.



The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni when delivering the farewell message said "It is truly fitting that we cannot speak of the success of the University of Venda without Prof Crafford's name. He spearheaded many successful projects in teaching and learning that led the University to where it is today. "We are where we are today because of the contributions of Prof Crafford and his hallmark kind of leadership". "We can all attest to Prof Crafford's Leadership. He is a very calm person that you can even read from his face". Dr Nthambeleni appreciated and thanked Prof Crafford's

unwavering support when he joined the University in 2019 as the Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

On behalf of the University, Senate, Council and SENEX, EMC and SMC, "we are so grateful that we had somebody like you". The Vice-Chancellor and Principal described Prof Crafford so well and perfectly so. Prof Crafford had been too much of help since he joined UNIVEN. "You were a devoted friend, a true and dependable colleague. We traveled together in exceedingly demanding situations." He said managing the challenges of the University is not an easy task. "When others go to sleep, you are up to solving the challenges. Sometimes when you walk, other people believe that all is well, hence you know that it is not." Prof Crafford stayed longer at UNIVEN and has all the institutional memories for things that have worked and things that have failed. He thanked Prof Crafford's wisdom that they moved mountains together. Dr Nthambeleni indicated that Prof Crafford has been leading a particularly important division of the University, the academic, teaching and learning. Through Prof Crafford's leadership, the University traverses a number of issues. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal thanked Prof Crafford's kind of leadership which was an example of how we should lead. He describes Prof Crafford as a servant, humble leader that all can attest to. All these attributes come from the richness of his heart. He has always had an effective way of engaging with students. "Prof Crafford is very hands-on on social media." He has been regarded as a source of information to the EMC and SMC on what is going on in the students' space or if there will be a strike the following day, he would be the first to know. "You have been a father to many." Dr Nthambeleni said, "When the history of the University is written, your name will feature more greatly based on the contributions and amount of time you gave to this institution."

Dr Nthambeleni wished Prof Crafford good health as he retires but also thanked him for availing himself even beyond retirement.

In his response, Prof Crafford thanked his colleagues in the EMC that it has been a huge privilege to serve the University of Venda as an Executive Manager for the past ten years and five years before then as a Senior Manager. "The reason I have been here so long is because I always believe that UNIVEN is a special place. It is a special place for special people and serves incredibly special students. "One of the best things about my retirement is that I'm retiring when UNIVEN climbs the ladder when it comes to its rankings," says Crafford. He thanked and appreciated the Vice-Chancellor's appointment for a second term.

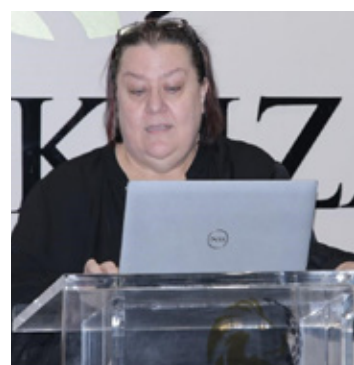
He mentioned that he knows that the Vice-Chancellor and Principal will take UNIVEN to greater heights even in his second term. Prof Crafford thanked all the colleagues he worked with as well as those in EMC. "As our institution is an institution of learning, we too, should also learn from each other. This big ship is still sailing in the right direction with a good hand." He thanked the Executive Deans and told them that he is leaving the faculties in good hands and that he expects to hear wonderful things going forward.

He concluded his response by saying 'Above all let's treat each other with love.'

Well wishes were pouring from different representations from directors, executive deans, and executive management.



Director Human Resources, Mrs Uanda Ndou on behalf of all the directors, gave a glimpse of the history of Prof Crafford. Representing the directors, she defined Prof Crafford by his humility and his calmness, gentleness and the just attitude he exuded in dealing with things.



When representing all the Executive Deans, Prof Natasha Potgieter who is the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture quoted most of the bible verses to give Prof Crafford strength and she even pronounced the blessings of the aroma of the bible and all joined hands in support of the blessings and that indeed may the Lord shine upon Prof Crafford.



The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Corporate Services, Dr Martin on behalf of EMC, described Prof Crafford very well when he says he is an honest person, though humble, he is a man of integrity. He is a man of some sterling character. He cannot just shift from what he believes and this is humbleness coupled with justice. Prof Crafford showed people how to be able to live and be honest in their lives.



"It is not easy to be the one to make a vote of thanks on an occasion when our very own colleague who served the University diligently is said to be leaving", these were the words of the University Registrar, Adv Edward Lambani with his own unique way of proposing a vote of thanks. "Indeed, we are becoming a giant as we are celebrating the Vice-Chancellor's second term and Prof Crafford who is retiring". Prof Crafford knew everything about the University. He became a lecturer, to being an executive and having been a principal of the University.

Prof Crafford's farewell function was considered by members of senior management as an opportune moment to celebrate the renewal of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal's contract for another five years. When responding to the messages of congratulations for the renewal of his contract, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni said he is humbled by the confidence shown by the University Council in his leadership and looks forward to continuing leading the University of Venda to be a world-class comprehensive institution of higher learning.



Dr Takalani Dzaga whilst directing the programme

The 2023 Academic Year marks the third year of the implementation of the University's Strategic Plan 2021-2025



The University of Venda in its 2023 Academic Year Calendar set aside a three-day workshop for the Mid-Term Strategic Plan Review with the purpose of assessing progress in the implementation of the University's Strategic Plan 2021-2025. The workshop further evaluated risks that could hinder the delivery of the University's Strategic Plan 2021-2025, which culminated in the development of a Fraud Risk Register, which is new to UNIVEN. The Mid-Term 2021-2025 Strategic Plan Review took place under the theme Is the Glass Half-Empty or Half-Full? The workshop was held at Kruger National Park, Skukuza Camp in Mpumalanga from 28 to 30 June 2023. The workshop received comprehensive presentations from the Executive Management and Senior Managers.

The workshop was officially opened by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni. Dr Nthambeleni informed the Senior Management Committee members that the 2023 Academic Year, marked the third year of the implementation of the University's Strategic Plan 2021-2025. He said the University of Venda has adopted the Results-Based Management Approach to implementing its 5-year Strategic Plan to be a high performing institution measured in terms of clear articulation of performance standards in the Strategic Plan; Institutionalised Executive Management performance review processes; high employees work rates and ethical standards as well as good corporate governance.



The Vice-Chancellor and Principal pointed out that the methodology of the Mid-term review process will be in a two-phase

approach in order to assess the progress or results of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025. He stated that the first phase is the institutional self-evaluation or internal review led by members of Executive and Senior Management. In addition, he alluded that "This planned three-day Midterm Strategy workshop is intended to address the first phase of the review while the second phase will be conducted by the external panel of experts appointed by the Executive Management Committee during the month of July 2023. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal further mentioned that "The panel is requested to conduct an independent objective review of the current Strategic Plan's successes and weaknesses in line with the terms of reference of the review.

Dr Nthambeleni said that decisions to be taken can either build or break the development of the University. Therefore, the decisions should be impactful and meaning full in order to move UNIVEN forward. He encouraged members to communicate the decisions taken with those who were not part of the workshop for them to understand the strategic direction of the University. "We must understand our roles as leaders. Many companies failed because of poor leadership. People that we lead must have trust in us and follow us with confidence. We must ask ourselves as to what type of messages are we communicating, we need to strengthen each other in order to move forward," concluded the Vice-Chancellor and Principal.



The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Corporate Services presented the UNIVEN Integrated

Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Biodiversity Plan - Towards Sustainable Development and Transformative Socio-economic Impact. Dr Martin highlighted that there is a need to Integrate entrepreneurship, innovation and biodiversity conservation to create a synergistic approach to drive sustainable transformation and socio-economic development within UNIVEN and grassroots communities. Talking about Engaged Scholarship as the centrepiece, he emphasised the importance of collaboration, community engagement and the application of knowledge to drive sustainable development.

Giving the background of the plan, Dr Martin showed that currently, the University of Venda is on a transformative journey to become an Entrepreneurial University. This is articulated as a strategic thrust in UNIVEN's Strategic Plan 2021-2025. At the heart of this plan lies the UNIVEN Integrated Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Biodiversity Plan (UIEIBP). The latter aims to position the University as a catalyst for positive change within the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve (VBR) and beyond. Being one of only two universities worldwide located in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, UNIVEN has unique opportunities at its disposal to foster entrepreneurship, innovation and biodiversity conservation while contributing to socio-economic development.

Through collaborations with diverse stakeholders, the University strives to reduce unemployment, inequality and poverty rates, and facilitate the achievement of sustainable development in alignment with national, continental and international objectives. To achieve this, UNIVEN recognises the need for harnessing the power of collaboration; unlocking the potential of its geographical location; integrating innovation into inclusive socio-economic development; embracing its unique status to fuel transformation; and weaving engaged scholarship into the core business.



On the last day of the workshop, members received a presentation from the outgoing Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, Prof Jan Crafford who presented about Teaching and Learning readiness: Implementation of the Reviewed 2023 enrolment targets and preparatory plan for the 2024 academic year, Enrolment targets' for 2023-2025, Proactive measures to meet ministerial targets, Cohort analysis and Programmes viability.

It was reflected that "In 2025, the proportion of headcount enrolments by major field of study should be 51.8% in science, engineering and technology; 13.9% in business and management; 11.5% in education and 22.9% in other humanities. He mentioned that "The targeted success rate for 2025 is 81% which is the same as the actual reported rate in 2019". In terms of graduation output, he stated that "The total graduate output should increase from 3 065 in 2019 to 3 241 in 2025."

When presenting about scarce skills undergraduate output, Prof Crafford indicated that "The graduate contribution in scarce skill areas for 2025 should be 70 in engineering; 709 in life and physical sciences, 492 in animal and human health, and 868 in initial teacher education".

Regarding Programme viability, Prof Crafford highlighted the Implementation of the 2023 Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance schedule of programme review which is crucial. He also mentioned the ruthless phasing out of programmes that are not relevant. "The University needs to pay close attention to programmes that are not viable with regard to enrolment numbers", added Prof Crafford.

Positive news from NRF evaluation and rating of three Staff members from the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture



The Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture is proud to celebrate the positive news from the NRF that its three staff members have been evaluated and added to the rising number of NRF rated researchers at the University of Venda which is growing tremendously. Prof. Stanford Shateyi who is now a C2 NRF rated researcher, Dr JP Kabue Ngandu who became a C3 NRF rated researcher and Prof Afsatou N Traore who is a C3 NRF rated researcher, have been evaluated in recognition of their outstanding contribution to national and international research across a range of disciplines. All these bring a total of NRF rated researchers at UNIVEN to 43, effective 01 January 2023. Prior to the re-evaluation, Prof Shateyi was a C3 rated researcher from January 2017 to December 2022. He is a full Professor in Applied Mathematics in the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics at the University of Venda (UNIVEN). He is currently the HOD of the Science Foundation. In 1997, Prof Shateyi obtained his BSc Honours degree in Applied Mathematics from the National University of Science and Technology (Zimbabwe). In 1999, Prof Shateyi received a NUFU scholarship to enroll for a Masters degree at the University of Zimbabwe. He then graduated with a Master of Science degree in 2001, specialising in fluid flows over compliant surfaces. His Masters thesis was published in the Australian and New Zealand Industrial and Applied Mathematics Journal in 2002. In 2008 he graduated with his PhD from the University of Zimbabwe. His PhD focused on natural convection in boundary layer flows in the presence of a chemical reaction. He managed to publish five papers in peer-reviewed journals from his PhD thesis.

Prof Shateyi's research areas of interest are Fluid Mechanics, Differential Equations, and Numerical Analysis. He has been involved in research on topics such as magneto hydrodynamics, steady and unsteady flows, stretching and shrinking surfaces, nanofluid flows, among others. He has analysed the effects of different significant parameters affecting fluid flows in both Newtonian and Non-Newtonian fluids, both Darcy and NonDarcy flow. Prof Shateyi is a member of a Fluid Mechanics research group involved in developing new analytical and numerical techniques. This research group has even improved well-known analytical techniques such as the well celebrated Homotopy Analysis Method. This research group has managed to breed methods like Spectral Analysis and Homotopy Analysis together to produce more accurate results.

Prof Shateyi has so far published more than 100 papers in peer-reviewed journals and nine book chapters. He is the first to supervise and graduate a PhD student in the University's Department of Mathematics.



Dr JP Kabue Ngandu became a C3 NRF rated researcher with effect from 01 January 2023. He is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture. He holds a PhD in Microbiology from UNIVEN, an MSc and BSc Honours degree in Medical Virology (Stellenbosch University), BTech in Medical Biology from ISTM-Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo). His research interests include Human enteric viruses, Viral gastroenteritis, Norovirus diversity, Norovirus and host genetic interactions, Norovirus and microbiota interactions,

Environmental and Animal microbiology in One health research field. He is a registered Medical Biological Scientist (Virology) at Health Professions Council of South Africa. Dr JP Kabue Ngandu is actively involved in the supervision, co-supervision, and mentorship of postgraduate students at the Biochemistry and Microbiology department. He is currently co-supervising three PhD candidates. He authored/co-authored at least 20 peer-reviewed articles with 417 citations and h-index 8 (Google Scholar). He is a reviewer of several internationally accredited journals.

The NRF rating system is part of the NRF's goal to build a globally competitive science system in South Africa and benchmarks the quality of our researchers against the rest of the world. NRF rating considers a researcher's recent research outputs and impact as perceived by international peer reviewers. The rating system encourages researchers to publish high quality research outputs in high impact journals/outlets. Rated researchers as supervisors will impart cutting-edge skills to the next generation of researchers.

The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Prof Natasha Potgieter when congratulating Prof Shateyi and Dr Kabue Ngandu said: "It is of great importance to acknowledge and celebrate these exceptional UNIVEN employees for their enormous contribution to research development".



Prof Afsatou N Traore is a C3 NRF rated researcher with effect from the 01 January 2023. She is a Professor and Interim Head of the Department of Biochemistry and

Microbiology in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture. Prof AN Traore qualified as a Biochemist obtaining a Licence (BSc degree) and Maitrise (B.Sc. Hons) from Joseph Fourier University (Grenoble, France). She moved to South Africa and obtained a MSc in Biochemistry (Rand Afrikaans Universiteit) and a PhD in Biochemistry (University of Johannesburg in 2005).

For her working career, she was a Junior Lab Manager for the HIV Research Team (RAU/UJ); Post-Doc Fellow, Water & Health Research Unit (UJ); Biochemist in several projects funded by the WHO, WERF and WRC on Diarrheal Diseases at the Water & Health Research Unit (UJ); Senior Project Manager at the Contract Lab Services (CLS, WITS Health Consortium); Principal Investigator in TB projects (CERMEL, Gabon); Clinical Lab Director at MRU (Albert Schweitzer Hospital, Lambaréné, Gabon) and is currently the Interim HOD of Biochemistry and Microbiology (UNIVEN).

Prof Traore has further graduated from the Nelson Mandela University with a Postgraduate Certificate in Women in Leadership (April 2022) and holds a Postgraduate certificate in Management and Leadership in Higher Education system from the University of Venda (March 2021).

Prof Traore has been actively involved in teaching and conducting medical research in South Africa; and has had opportunities at various times to work on bacterial and viral diseases including diarrhea, TB and HIV. She has acquired relevant experience in Auditing, proposal writing, project management, proposal/project evaluation, data collection, storage, analysis, and writing up for scientific publications. In addition, she has presented the results of her research at national and international scientific meetings.

Since joining UNIVEN in 2014, she has successfully supervised and co-supervised to completion, 60 BSc Hons, 22 masters and 6 PhD students (88).

She is part of a Research Group, led by Prof Potgieter, that has received several research grants from the Wellcome Trust, WRC, NORPART, ELEPHANT Project, EBDOMICS and SAMRC.

A Media Studies honours student successfully crossed over the finishing line of the 2023 Comrades Marathon



Mr Benjamin Tjiane after crossing the finishing line



Dr Percy Mugwedi and Mr Benjamin Tjiane at the Comrades Exhibition Event

On Sunday, 11 June 2023, Mr Benjamin Mmoifo Tjiane, a Media Studies honours student at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) participated in the 2023 edition of the Comrades Marathon as a novice (an athlete running a Comrade marathon for the first time). It was for the first time in the



history of the University of Venda that the UNIVEN Athletics Club is represented at the Comrades Marathon which is recognised as an International Marathon.

The Sport and Recreation Unit under Student Affairs Department supported Benjamin as the only registered student and an athlete

under UNIVEN Athletics Club who qualified to run the 2023 Comrades Marathon. As a Novice Runner, Mr Tjiane successfully crosses over the finishing line with a finishing time of 11:05:34 (Eleven hours, Five Minutes and Thirty-Four Seconds) which is an impressive record for a novice runner.

Dr Ndiafhi Percy Mugwedi, Sports Administrator travelled with Mr Benjamin Tjiane to participate in the Comrades Marathon. On Saturday, 10 June 2023, Dr Mugwedi together with Mr Tjiane attended the Comrades Marathon Exhibition event, Comrades Race Briefing Event and further went to collect the race packs at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Durban.

The University congratulates Mr Tjiane for the bold step he took to participate and represent the University in this challenging international competition.

Prof Jan Crafford served the University of Venda for 23 years



Prof Jan Crafford (right) and Prof Bongani Banhuni greeting the attendees of the Farewell event

On Wednesday, 21 June 2023, senior and middle managers gathered at Kalahari waterfront, Nandoni Hall to bid farewell to the Deputy- Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, Prof Jan Crafford. Prof Crafford has served the University for a period of 23 years.



In her welcome and purpose, Mrs Mushoni Mulaudzi, Director of Library Services highlighted that Prof Crafford has dedicated a good 23 years to UNIVEN. She mentioned that it is with mixed emotions to bid farewell to him. Mrs Mulaudzi said she appreciated the leadership trait of compassion that Prof Crafford led with. She said, "Retirement is not the end but an opening of a new chapter in life."



In his well wishes, Mr Gudani Tshamano, UNIVEN SRC President mentioned that as the student representatives they are celebrating and bidding farewell to one of the people who always supported the students. Mr Tshamano thanked Prof Crafford for the engagements they had and for always solving the student's problems and making sure they excel academically.



Deputy Registrar, Academic Administration, Mr Mpariseni Ligudu said he is honoured to be one of the people who got a chance to celebrate Prof Crafford's contributions and hard work at UNIVEN. He mentioned that UNIVEN is lucky to witness his unwavering dedication. Mr Ligudu mentioned that he is grateful to have learned a lot of things from Prof Crafford.



When representing Directors from other departments, Director Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance, Dr Sannah Mativandlela described Prof Crafford as a legend. He thanked him for ensuring that UNIVEN offers good quality programmes to students. She said her Department received a positive mid-year report a few weeks ago and this was achieved under the leadership of Prof Crafford. "Working with you has been a delight and we have learned a lot from you. We are who we are today, thanks to your efforts. We are inspired by your dedication and hard work. People like you are difficult to find. You have been that unique role model. This is the beginning of an exciting new chapter of your life and enjoy it," she told Prof Crafford. She concluded her talk by mentioning that Prof Crafford took many years taking care of staff and students, and this was his time to take care of himself.



When speaking on behalf of Heads of Departments, Prof Peter Tshisikhawe, HOD Biological Sciences mentioned that when he met Prof Crafford, he learned that respect is earned. "You earn respect from your actions. We have achieved a lot under the leadership of Prof Crafford. We ran successful projects because of the support of Prof Crafford." He wished Prof Crafford good health on his retirement.



HOD: Disability Unit, Dr Tshifhiwa Mbuva spoke on behalf of Heads of the Administration departments. She thanked Prof Crafford for the continuous support and courage that he gave them during his time at UNIVEN. She said Prof Crafford encouraged staff members to further their studies. "He made sure that funds were available to fund our studies. We are going to miss your leadership and the fatherly nurturing care that you gave us. May your retirement be everything that you have hoped for," she said.



In her farewell message, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning, Prof Tharien van der Walt representing Faculty Deputy Deans described Prof Crafford as someone who always inspired and nurtured those around him. She said Prof Crafford has shaped the careers of many people around him. "He has been a source of inspiration and a pillar of strength. We have been fortunate for the transformation you brought at UNIVEN. I have learned a lot from you. Your legacy will continue to inspire us. You have been more than a senior leader to us. We salute you, Prof Crafford," she said.



Deputy Dean, Research and Postgraduate, Prof Takalani Mashau, said Prof Crafford had an open-door policy. He was always ready to assist everyone irrespective of position. Prof Mashau said he feels so honoured to bid farewell to Prof Crafford. "Prof Crafford gives everyone an opportunity to share with him their challenges and assist in coming up with solutions to those challenges. He never discarded anyone. He is so generous." He described Prof Crafford as a strategic leader with a vision. "You have been DVC for many years and when change came, you created the space for all. You are leaving a mark in our University. We felt the warmth and tender care from you, and we will never forget you," said Prof Mashau.



In his message of support Director School of Law, Prof Lonias Ndlovu, thanked Prof Crafford for facilitating his process of Promotion. Dr Ndlovu said when he was appointed as the Dean of the School of Law, he found Prof Crafford to be someone who accommodates everyone without worrying about anything. "He is an empathetic leader who steps into other people's shoes. You are a versatile leader." He wished him all the best in his retirement.



Tebello Mofokeng said it's a loss to him seeing Prof Crafford retiring but he has learned a lot from him. He described him as a great leader.

Prof Jan Crafford served the University of Venda for 23 years continued..



The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Prof Bongani Bantwini said that the executive deans have learned a lot from Prof Crafford. "You have led us with empathy. You have put us into your shoes." He concluded by mentioning that Prof Crafford has inspired many staff people to be creative. "This is not the end of the road but the opening of a highway for you," he said.



In his response, Prof Jan Crafford said humility comes naturally when you realise that you have a lot to learn and to improve in life. He stated that UNIVEN has been a constant period of growth for him. Prof Crafford thanked attendees for the gifts and for warm messages of support. He said when he joined UNIVEN from the University of Pretoria he had a lot to learn.

We are today a University that most of us have imagined. However, a lot still needs to improve for the generations to come.

He thanked his parents because they believed in service. "I have learned a lot from them. This place is next to my heart that's why I am here and that's why I have been serving here. We have a duty of taking care of those entrusted to us as leaders." He thanked all staff members for carrying him during his tenure at UNIVEN.

Prof Crafford described Ms Mushiana as a perfect PA. "I would not have been who I am if it was not for you managing the office," he told Ms Mushiana. He thanked Ms Gudani Mushiana for working with him for the past 16 years. He further told her that if it was not because of her, he would not have survived.



The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Prof Natasha Potgieter told Prof Crafford that he was a wonderful colleague who always listens to others. "You were humble towards everyone. You have served staff and students with humility. You looked out for all of us. Your retirement is well deserved. Retirement gives you a life of pleasure. It is time for you to rest." She thanked Prof Crafford for treating other people well and with respect.



Ms Gudani Mushiana said Prof Crafford was like a family member to her. She has worked with him for 16 years. Ms Mushiana said Prof Crafford appreciates everything, even smaller things. She appreciated the chance that was afforded to her to work with Prof Crafford. She wished him a healthy retirement.



Amongst other gifts, a couch and a coffee machine were bought as gifts for Prof Crafford.



When giving a vote of thanks message, Prof Tshildzi Mulaudzi said Prof Crafford has diligently served UNIVEN well. Prof Mulaudzi thanked Prof Crafford's family for allowing him to serve the UNIVEN community for half of his life. She thanked Gudani for stepping into the shoes of Prof Crafford in his absence.



The Programme was directed by the Director Marketing, Branding and Communication, Dr Takalani Dzaga.

"You were humble towards everyone. You have served staff and students with humility. You looked out for all of us. Your retirement is well deserved. Retirement gives you a life of pleasure. It is time for you to rest."



Attendees of the farewell event posing for a photo with Prof Crafford

History in the making as UNIVEN Football Club participates at the SAFA Vhembe SAB League Group Winners and Champ of Champs play-offs for the first time



Staff members and Students went out in numbers to support UNIVEN

As an affiliated football club under the SAFA (South African Football Association) Vhembe Region, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) Football Club (FC) participated at the SAFA Vhembe SAB League Group Winners and Champ of Champs play-offs. The first three games were played on Friday, 16 June and on Sunday, 18 June 2023.

During the 2022/23 season, the club played 26 games with an impressive winning record, and they were crowned the champions after winning the Stream D-2 League. UNIVEN FC progressed to participate at the SAFA Vhembe SAB Group Winners and Champ of Champs Play Offs which is a historic moment in the history of the University of Venda.

On Friday, 16 June 2023 UNIVEN FC played their first SAFA Vhembe SAB Group Winners Play Offs game against Tshivhazwaulu Peace Makers and won 1-0. This game took place at Malamulele Stadium. After this impressive win, the team proceeded to play the Champ of Champs Play Offs where they were placed under Group C and were fixtured to play two games. In the morning of Sunday, 18 June 2023, the team played its first game at Tshifudi Stadium against Eagles United

FC and the match ended with a score sheet of 0-0 draw. The second game was played against Merwe United FC in the afternoon of the same day at the same stadium. During this game, UNIVEN FC won 2-0 resulting in the team being crowned the champions of Group C Champ of Champs Play Offs. That qualified UNIVEN FC to play the semifinal with the remaining best top four teams. A win from this semifinal would have guaranteed UNIVEN FC a place to play the Finals of the SAFA Vhembe SAB Group Champ of Champs Play Offs. The winner of the SAFA Vhembe SAB Group Champ of Champs Play Offs represented SAFA Vhembe at the SAFA Limpopo promotional playoffs. Teams that finished first and second were promoted to play in the ABC Motsepe League (formerly known as Vodacom League) which is a professional third tier league of the Premier Soccer League in South Africa.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni congratulated UNIVEN FC and said that the University will make necessary resources available in support of UNIVEN FC. He encouraged staff and students to continue supporting UNIVEN FC.



UNIVEN FC in blue kit playing in front of a fully packed Malamulele Stadium



Photo supplied: UNIVEN FC players posing for a group photo at Malamulele Stadium



UNIVEN FC players celebrating after winning a group winners play offs match



Photo supplied: UNIVEN FC players posing for a group photo at Tshifudi Stadium

Ms Shumani Nembudani represents UNIVEN at the Women in Tech Global Summit



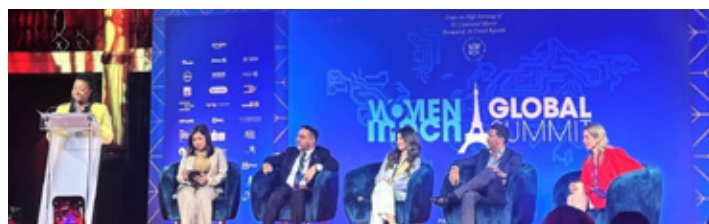
Ms Shumani Nembudani CA(SA), Senior Manager Centre for Entrepreneurship (left) with Ms Hwalani Mabaso Chairperson of the Governance Board Centre for Entrepreneurship (right)

Ms Shumani Nembudani, a Senior Manager at the University of Venda (UNIVEN)'s Centre for Entrepreneurship recently attended the Women in Tech Global Summit which was held in Paris. The Women in Tech Global Summit, which was under the High Patronage of Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic was a true celebration of talent, diversity, and women empowerment. From the beginning to the end, it was clear that this event was meticulously organised memorable experience for all 400 delegates from more than 50 countries. With chapters now across 45 countries (and 100 by 2025), is driving impact through the local, regional, and international partners, supporters, ecosystem enablers across its focus in four pillars: Education, Advocacy, Entrepreneurship(business) and digital (and social) inclusion.

Women entrepreneurs are critical to a thriving and inclusive economy, and yet they face numerous challenges in growing their businesses. Whether through Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) or business lens, gender equality is imperative for achieving development outcomes and growing economies at local, national, and global levels. In Sub-Saharan Africa, which has the highest rate of female entrepreneurship worldwide, women-owned businesses are typically smaller in size and report lower volumes of sales and earnings in comparison to men-owned businesses. Furthermore, women-owned businesses face significantly greater barriers than men-owned businesses in securing financial support and investment, thus the panel discussions around the importance of ownership, Entrepreneurship and Investment for Women resonated a lot. This panel discussion that had the likes of Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia at UN Women which was moderated by David Savage, Group Technology Evangelist at Nash Square

addressed the challenges and opportunities for women in business globally. The discussions highlighted the barriers and opportunities for growth and innovation in various industries and explored ways to create a more equitable and inclusive business environment. Alia, together with her panellists concluded that technology plays a pivotal role in progressing the UN global agenda for sustainable development and that inclusion is critical to economic growth.

There was an exceptional panel discussion on Leveraging Technology for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs: including poverty eradication, access to education, health and well-being, gender equality, and environmental sustainability) moderated by the inspiring Dr Christyl Johnson, Deputy Director for Science and Technology Investments at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. The Sustainable Development Goals are a blueprint for creating a better and more sustainable future for all. With technology evolving at a rapid pace, UNIVEN should use technology as a tool for achieving these goals through student entrepreneurship activities. One of the roles of the UNIVEN Centre for Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation is to ensure we bridge the gap between entrepreneurship and tech and continue to close the digital divide and gender gap within the higher education space in the Vhembe District and beyond. Our students could have the potential to make the most effective transformation of the world into a better place for all and which better way than with the role of technology to achieve SDGs through Hackathons and entrepreneurship challenges. The implementation of the SDGs makes companies more attractive for employees, investors, and customers and thus more successful - which can be measured!



In a world that is becoming increasingly connected, the importance of cybersecurity continues to grow and so the need for startups and small businesses to be capacitated in this area is crucial for entrepreneurs. There is also a dire need for the growth of cybersecurity startups because of the ever-changing nature of cyber threats. Whilst the UCFERI works with entrepreneurs to refine their ideas, build out their business plans and work on their product-market fit, making use of digital technologies to support these entrepreneurs find new revenue and value-producing opportunities would be critical; and with this growing digitisation, businesses are facing severe challenges of cyber threats. Thus, businesses need to reimagine, rethink, and reinvent their strategies, products, and services to create a culture of online safety and awareness.

Towards the end of the summit, delegates witnessed WOMEN IN TECH - Global Movement officially signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UN Women - A collaboration that will empower women in the technology sector and promote gender equality in Europe and the Central Asia region.

The gender imbalance in the business space, more especially in the technology sector is narrowing, but not nearly as fast as it should be. Better representation of women is needed and as part of our drive to increase female representation in entrepreneurship and technology, the UCFERI is looking into potential collaborations and partnerships that will foster creativity and a technologically driven entrepreneurial mindset in our students with the following delegates from the summit:

- Carole Njoya – Alcee (Cybersecurity for Startups)
- Dominnique Karetso - Healthy Pleasure Group (Healthcare Innovation Bootcamp and Hackathon)
- Viviantie Sarjuni – Sabah Creative Economy and Innovation Centre (SCENIC) (Capacity Building)
- Daleen Pretorius – ABSA Group (Head of Platforms -cloud)

In her closing remarks Élisabeth Moreno mentioned that there is a certainty that the delegates did not only walk away with an extended network pool but with a renewed vigour for life.



Élisabeth Moreno is the CEO of LEIA Partners and the former Minister for Gender Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities reporting to the French Prime Minister from 2020 to 2022. While she discussed concerns about why there is only 30% women in the tech space globally, she quoted the Nobel Prize winner, Desmond Tutu: "if we are going to see real development in the world, then our best investment is women." She reiterated the need for international organisations like UN Women and NGOs to combine their strengths, collective intelligence, and FINANCE to make this needed transformation happen.

We received more insight about STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Maths) and its vital contribution to creating a better and healthier world for generations. The keynotes delivered by inspiring women in the tech industry were both insightful and thought-provoking. From how women are leading the Way in Web3, AI Ethics and Policy, to advancing financial inclusion, their stories and achievements served as powerful reminders that barriers can be broken, and glass ceilings shattered. These remarkable individuals have paved the way for generations to come.

"One of the biggest highlights was, the Women in Tech South African Team walking away with an award for 'The Most Impact in Digital Inclusion'". Ms Shumani Nembudani is a member of the Women in Tech Global Movement - South African Chapter.



Ms Shumani Nembudani represents UNIVEN at the Women in Tech Global Summit continued..



The Women in Tech SA team with their award for Most Impact in Digital Inclusion The Women in Tech SA team with their award for Most Impact in Digital Inclusion

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to UNIVEN for providing me the opportunity to attend the Women in Tech Summit in Paris. It has been a privilege and an honour to be part of such an inspiring and thought-provoking event. I have learned so much from the incredible women and men I met, and I'm excited to bring this newfound knowledge and inspiration back to UNIVEN". This was indeed a successful Women in Tech Global Summit which is in line with the University of Venda's Strategic Thrust 2 and 4, Entrepreneurial University and Linkages, Partnerships, and Internationalisation respectively.



Standard Bank donates 7000 packets of Sanitary towels to UNIVEN

On Wednesday, 07 June 2023, Standard Bank donated 7000 packets of sanitary towels to the University of Venda (UNIVEN). The handing over of these sanitary towels took place at the University's Research and Conference Centre. These sanitary towels will be shared amongst needy female students through the Office of the Student Representative Council (SRC).



In his welcome remarks, Director Marketing, Branding and Communication, Dr Takalani Dzaga said UNIVEN is grateful to be receiving such a valuable donation from Standard Bank. He told Standard Bank officials that the University does not take this donation lightly especially because what has been donated intends to restore the dignity of female students. Dr Dzaga mentioned that all beneficiaries of what has been donated are young females, "so, the donation has come at the right time when the country is celebrating Youth month." Dr Dzaga further mentioned that this donation is in line with the University's Strategic Objective 1: to enhance student well-being and success. He said he wishes that all other stakeholders could see what Standard Bank has done for the University and do the same. "We need stakeholders such as Standard Bank in order to achieve our Strategic Objectives."



The University Registrar, Adv Edward Lambani thanked Standard Bank for what they have done for students. The issue of access to sanitary towels is something that we should always be thinking about because somewhere as we speak there is someone who is in need of these towels. "They are extremely important. We thank Standard Bank for intervening in the area that no stakeholder wanted to go into." The University Registrar also thanked the SRC for seeing a need to seek assistance on behalf of fellow students. "You are indeed true definitions of what leaders are."



Head of Personal Banking at Standard Bank, Mr Andries Ndlovu said Standard Bank regards all citizens as their stakeholders but institutions of higher learning such as UNIVEN

are their key stakeholders because they value education, and Standard Bank believes in empowering the youth. He highlighted that their partnership with UNIVEN is not only about money but anything that could assist the University to progress and succeed in creating future leaders. "We are donating because we saw a need to do so. We want to build our society starting with the leaders of tomorrow. These students are the future generation and without education, our country is not going anywhere," he said.

Mr Ndlovu continued to highlight that the promotion of education is particularly important and Standard Bank wants to make sure that they participate in all activities without worrying about anything. "We are investing in them because they are the future of this country."

He appreciated the partnership that Standard Bank has with UNIVEN because through UNIVEN, standard bank is able to contribute towards building the future of this country. "This is not a once-off donation, we will still come back to donate other things such as soccer and volleyball kit, both home and away. We also commit that we will organise a workshop where students and staff members will be taught financial literacy and wellness."



In his response, the SRC President, Mr Gudani Tshamano said the SRC welcomes the donation on behalf of students. Mr Tshamano said when the Office of the SRC asked for this donation, unlike other businesses, Standard Bank swiftly responded. "We thank Standard Bank for not taking a long time to respond to us and for what they have done for our students." This shows us that Standard Bank cares about communities. The SRC President explained that they had a lot of students coming to them asking for donations because they do not have money to buy these valuables. He suggested that the government should start to provide sanitary towels for all females.



Representation from UNIVEN Executive Management, SRC and Standard Bank displaying some of the donated sanitary towels



Attendees of the handing over ceremony

"We are donating because we saw a need to do so. We want to build our society starting with the leaders of tomorrow. These students are the future generation and without education, our country is not going anywhere,"



In his vote of thanks, Student Governance Administrative Officer, Mr Andisani Mathelemusa said they are happy that this is not a once-off donation but something that is still ongoing. He thanked the Standard Bank for this donation.



The programme was directed by the Assistant Schools Liaison Officer, Mr Justice Lebopa

Glenda Ramathavha represents Limpopo Province in The TasteMaster Season 4



Ms Glenda Ramathavha, an employee of the University of Venda attached to the Department of Revenue and Financial Aid, will be appearing on SABC TV screens on season 4 in the TasteMaster Show. It premieres on Tuesday, 13 June 2023 on SABC2 at 19:00.

The TasteMaster is a show about baking and flavour pairing.

Glenda is among SA's Top 12 contestants and the only one representing and raising the Limpopo flag high.

During the interview with Nendila Newsletter about what she would be doing with her prize if she becomes lucky, Glenda did not hesitate to express her wish to support needy students at the University of Venda. Her preference is the deserving students

with a specific focus on Nutrition, Rural Development and Social Entrepreneurship programmes.

"The world is full of opportunities. If you set your mind on something, work hard at it, and yes falling is inevitable but the courage to continue is what counts most. Believe in yourself 100% and there will come a day when others have no choice but to believe in you", says Glenda Ramathavha about her ideals in life. She also stands by Nelson Mandela's words "It always seems impossible until it is done".

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Mr Botwe Kraziya on behalf of the University congratulated Glenda and wished her the best of luck in this competition.

The Chinese Embassy and UNIVEN discuss leveraging Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) partnerships for sustainable development in the region



UNIVEN team led by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni and the Chinese delegation led by Minister Counselor Long Shen (Pictured at Research Conference Centre)

On Monday, 05 June 2023, a delegation from the Chinese Embassy visited the University of Venda (UNIVEN) to discuss the current and future plans of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that was signed between UNIVEN and Hubei University of Technology (HBUT) in 2019, as well as potential collaborations that could be undertaken by UNIVEN and other Chinese institutions. This hybrid meeting took place at UNIVEN Research Conference Centre.



In his opening and welcome address, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni said this occasion marks a significant milestone in our diplomatic relations, reinforcing the mutual respect and cooperation that exists between China and South Africa. Dr Nthambeleni mentioned that China has a rich history that spans thousands of years, and its contributions to art, science, philosophy, and culture are truly remarkable. "China's rapid economic growth and technological advancements have made it a key player on the international stage. The Chinese Embassy serves as a bridge, connecting our two nations and facilitating meaningful exchanges in various fields," he said.

Dr Nthambeleni continued to tell attendees that the collaboration between UNIVEN and Hubei University of Technology (HBUT) started with the signing of the MoU in 2019. He said this partnership has grown with the support of the Chinese Embassy in South Africa and some of UNIVEN staff and students are involved with some proposals submitted for funding. "The Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) has endorsed UNIVEN as a leader in South Africa to work with the Chinese University in Beijing on Africa-China Joint Laboratory Programme on Beidou Satellite Navigation System and Remote Sensing Applications," he said.

When concluding his speech, Dr Nthambeleni mentioned that the two parties can foster greater understanding and collaboration between our countries. It is through dialogue, openness, and cooperation that we can address the challenges of our time and work towards shared goals. "The Chinese Embassy plays a vital role in facilitating these exchanges, promoting cultural understanding, and strengthening the bonds between our people."



In his purpose of the visit, Minister Counselor Long Shen said that the essence of the visit is to promote the science and technology co-operation between UNIVEN and Chinese partners. Since the launch of the Belt and Road Science and Technology Innovation Action Plan in 2017, China and the Belt and Road countries have conducted cooperation in four aspects: science and technology people-to-people exchanges, joint laboratory construction, science and technology park cooperation, and technology transfer. As the first three-year plan of the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035 started in 2021, China will work closely with African countries to jointly implement the nine projects. First is the health project. Second is poverty reduction and beneficiation of agriculture. Sixth is green development projects. Most of them are related to STI, the Ministry of Science and Technology in China has signed several MOUs with the DSI to enable these projects. Under this framework, both sides have joint research labs and have launched joint research project calls each year which are one flagship project and no more than 15 other projects.

The Minister Counsellor concluded by noting that the "China-South Africa Young Scientist Exchange Programme" is an important cooperation thrust under the mechanism of the China-South Africa Intergovernmental Joint Committee on Science and Technology Cooperation. It aims to broaden the channels of exchange between young researchers of the two countries and consolidate the foundation of China-South Africa science and technology innovation cooperation. "We encourage more universities like UNIVEN to apply for the joint research labs." "There are a lot of opportunities for these young scientists." Minister Counsellor Shen continued to mention that he has realised that UNIVEN has a lot of potential farmers who could teach the Chinese farmers a few skills about farming and surely those farmers could also learn from the Chinese. "This is a good move for both Countries," he said.



Remarks from Vice-President of Hubei University of Technology, Prof Song Xiaochun, who joined the meeting virtually said the partnership between UNIVEN and Hubei University of Technology should be cherished and nurtured because it will bear fruitful results for both countries.

Director of Department of International Relations at the Hubei University of Technology, Ms Amy Long, virtually presented the overview of HBUT and UNIVEN cooperation and future plans. She outlined their proposals for future plans that had five areas of focus.



In his overview of UNIVEN collaboration with China and state of play, the Acting Director

International Relations and Partnerships, Dr Segun Obadire said internationalisation at UNIVEN has international footprints across the world and there are lot of MoUs that are signed with other international organisations. He said there are a lot of collaborative projects that are successful today and are bearing fruitful results. Dr Obadire continued to outline the proposed UNIVEN niche areas which included African heritage and Indigenous Knowledge Systems; Transformative Education; Law and Transformative Justice; Sustainable Development; One Health and Digital Transformation. He further indicated the university's research interest with the Chinese.

When presenting the overview of the Faculty of Science Engineering and Agriculture and Flagship projects, the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science Engineering and Agriculture, Prof Natasha Potgieter indicated that the faculty has several NRF rated scientists and there are still more that will be rated later this year. She also presented the role of Vuwani Science Resource Centre including the way this Science Centre contributes to the surrounding communities. She further presented about the DSI/SARChI Chair; Projects that the Department was working on such as the Biomass Digestors that are being offered within South African communities; Agricultural Projects; Research Niche Areas and other possible areas of partnerships.

The Chinese Embassy and UNIVEN discuss leveraging Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) partnerships for sustainable development in the region continued..



The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Prof Tshilidzi Mulaudzi and her colleagues in the faculty, Prof Lufuno Makhado, and Prof Rachel Lebesse presented their flagship projects in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Some of the projects include Glad Africa Epilepsy Research Project and Ubuntu Community Engagement Campaigns



Prof Tharien van der Walt from the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law, representing the Executive Dean of the faculty, Prof Modimowabarwa Kanyane presented the overview of the Faculty of Management Commerce and Law and Flagship projects including community engagement projects and the faculty's research niche areas/Thematic Thrusts.



The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Prof Bongani Bantwini presented the overview of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education and its Flagship projects.



When deliberating on the way forward, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Nosisi Feza said when people want to establish a relationship, they look at their strengths and weaknesses and explore possible areas of collaboration. She said there is no poverty in this region, what we need is resources to make sure that the food that is available here enhances the economy of this area. "Let us work together in making sure that we provide the skills that are needed." Prof Feza highlighted that the challenges cannot only be solved scientifically but through a combination of our Indigenous Knowledge Systems and science, we can solve a lot of issues to alleviate poverty and take a step towards sustainable development.



UNIVEN team led by Dr Bernard Nihambeleni (4th from left), and the Chinese embassy delegation led by Minister Counselor Long Shen (5th from left)

Alugumi Samuel Ndou: from a matriculant to a PhD graduate



A 49-year Dr Alugumi Samuel Ndou was appointed by the Department of Library Services of the University of Venda (UNVEN) as the Library Assistant having only Matric (Grade 12) as his highest qualification. He started his career being responsible for the circulation of library materials.

His journey to a PhD holder started in 2008 when he registered for a Diploma in Records Management through distance learning.

After obtaining his Diploma in Records Management, he enrolled for a Bachelor of Business Administration degree with the Southern Business School and completed it in 2012. The above-mentioned qualifications were insufficient for him to qualify to work as a professional Librarian. In 2013, Alugumi Ndou grabbed the opportunity of using his study leave days provided by UNIVEN to qualified employees to register and study full-time for a one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Information Studies with the University of Limpopo (UL).

After acquiring a professional qualification, Postgraduate Diploma in Information Studies, he continued working as a Library Assistant and did not stop furthering his studies. In 2015 he registered for a Master's Degree in Information Science with UNISA and completed it in 2017. In September 2017, his hard work paid off as the University of Venda appointed him as an Information Librarian assigned to the then School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences. In 2019, he was appointed as an Information Literacy Librarian, responsible for the provision of information literacy instructions to university students and staff.

Getting a professional position did not stop him from furthering his studies. In 2019, he registered for a doctoral degree with UNISA which he completed in December 2022 and graduated in May this year, 2023. His PhD thesis is entitled "Opportunities and challenges of integrating information literacy as a credit-bearing module into first-year level academic programmes at the University of Venda, South Africa".

Currently, Dr Ndou has authored four (4) articles published in peer-reviewed journals accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training and presented papers at three (3) conferences. Dr Ndou is a married man and a father of three boys. He completed his primary education at Rabali Primary School and proceeded to Patrick Ramaano Secondary where he obtained his Matric certificate with exemption. Dr Ndou and his three siblings were raised by a single unemployed mother after his father passed away when Alugumi was only in grade two. His parents were blessed with four children, two boys and two girls, and Dr Ndou being the second born in the family. He said his mother who became his role model, instills love and respect in her children. "She is a diligent worker and never lets her children

go to school on an empty stomach," added Ndou. Due to financial challenges, Dr Ndou did not manage to register for tertiary education after completing matric.

Fortunately, he got an opportunity to be appointed as a temporary Library Assistant responsible for shelving books at the then Makhado College of Education in 1995. In 1996, he was appointed as a permanent Library Assistant at the University of Venda, a position he held up to 2011, before being appointed as Chief Library Assistant at the same University.

Dr Ndou said that his journey to a PhD was inspired by his willingness to improve career prospects, passion for research work, and inspiration to learn new skills.

Like in any other journey, Dr Ndou indicated that he encountered many challenges including lack of spending quality time with his family members as well as his friends.

His message to other staff members and youth is that the current economic climate in Africa might demotivate many Black Africans, especially the youth. He said perseverance has its own ultimate reward. Dr Ndou quoted former late President Mandela's words: "A winner is a dreamer who never gives up."

The Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture congratulate and appreciate the new cohort of Associate and Full Professors



The Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture recently had a remarkably successful event in recognition of academics that were promoted from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor and Associate Professor to Full Professor. The programme was directed by the Research Professor, Prof Michael Chimonyo. Out of 22 academics promoted, 17 were promoted to associate professorship and five (05) to full professorship. The Executive Dean of the Faculty, Prof Natasha Potgieter gave a keynote address. She motivated all the academics before providing a clear definition of 'professorship' in the academic world. She emphasised that professorship remains relevant since first introduced in the late 14th century and outlined its value and relevance in realising the institutional strategic goals within the academic world.

Prof Potgieter further indicated that Professors are qualified experts in their field who perform some of the following tasks: managing teaching and learning, conducting research, and involved in publications in their departments. Professors must take a lead in presenting lectures and seminars in their specialties; and publishing advanced original research in peer reviewed journals in their fields. Above all, they must play a clear role in the provision of community service, including consulting functions, mentoring both staff and graduate students while conducting administrative and managerial functions at a higher level. All academic staff members promoted to professorship positions received written individual guidelines on their developmental areas as a contribution to their future growth. Each was promised support through planned monitoring by the Executive Dean to ensure that there is academic growth in the Faculty and found readily available for the next cycle of promotion.



Mrs Julia Sigama, the Faculty Manager welcomed all academics who were present and further stated the purpose of the event. She unpacked the transparent procedures followed during the promotion processes. She also motivated all staff members present and expressed that it was through their hard

work that earned them the promotion and thus deserved it unquestionably. She pleaded with all academics to continue supporting the Faculty to realise its strategic goals.

Prof Nethengwe responded on behalf of all academics who were promoted. He indicated that we are gathered to celebrate a remarkable achievement in the world of academia. He thanked the Executive Dean, the Faculty Manager, and Human Resources for recognising their hard work. "It is with great joy and pride that we acknowledge the promotion of most of our colleagues from Senior Lecturers to Associate Professors and from Associate Professor to Full Professor," said Prof Nethengwe. Prof Nethengwe further said that these promotions are long overdue since most of the colleagues have been an integral part of our institution for several years.

Prof Nethengwe further indicated that, over the years, their dedication, passion, and unwavering pursuit of knowledge have been truly inspiring. This promotion is a testament to their exceptional abilities, hard work, and significant contributions to their field of expertise.



Prof Traore congratulating the FSEA team for organising a successful event. She indicated that the recognition goes a long way and the FSEA motivated them to work even harder to reach the category of Professor Emeritus. The organising team received some tokens of appreciation from all academics who were promoted.



The Executive Dean thanked all academics who were promoted and further congratulated them on their career endeavor to grow, make a difference in the Faculty, leave a legacy, profess their niche areas, be responsible, be committed and dedicated mentors who inspire junior staff members in all respects. Each received a small token of appreciation from the Executive Dean's Office. The Farm Manager, Ms Thifheli Kutama proposed a vote of thanks.

"It is with great joy and pride that we acknowledge the promotion of most of our colleagues from Senior Lecturers to Associate Professors and from Associate Professor to Full Professor,"

Promotions from Associate Professor to Full Professor				
			Prof NE Maluta Absentia	Prof C Sigauke Absentia
			Prof SS Mnyakeni Moleele Absentia	Prof R Makungo Absentia
Promotions from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor				

The ICT Department contributes positively towards improving the graduateness and employability of students

The ICT team has taken a firm stand regarding contributing positively towards improving the graduateness, and employability of students. Every year ICT Department affords students who are doing their final year in computer science, media studies, and business information systems an opportunity to acquire technical and professional competencies by appointing them as student assistants. This year the ICT team has gone the extra mile by hosting a two-day student assistants' workshop where several thought-provoking and eye-opening presentations and discussions were made. The workshop took place on 13 -14 June 2023.

Ms Tabani Njaba, the facilitator of the workshop and a member of the coordinating team, posed a question that triggered a need to reflect on cyber security and ethics. Her skills in facilitating discussions contributed positively towards getting deeper into the topics presented.

Dr Nkhumbuleni Ratshitanga, the Head of ICT Support Services, encouraged students to be sure about what they want to achieve in their careers. "Having a passion for your dreams will contribute positively towards your success." The audience was also advised that persistence and perseverance are part of the game, as there is no easy road to success. "To advance your career, you should learn to work under pressure."

"Having a passion for your dreams will contribute positively towards your success."

Ms Mashudu Maligudu addressed the topic of 'How to Write a Proper CV and conduct yourself during Interviews.' These are the competencies that almost all students and prospective job seekers will aspire to have to gain access to the world of employment.

According to Ms Murunwa Malakate, dressing correctly and conducting oneself properly are the qualities that every professional organisation expects from their employees. This is also what is expected of every member of the ICT team.

Ms Nditsheni Mboweni, who was also part of the coordinators, introduced the student assistants 'to How to Manage Tickets on Service Desk System.' She achieved this through a practical demonstration on the University service desk. The presentation talked about ensuring effective and efficient ICT services to customers.

Mr Kabelo Ramoba talked about 'How to write a formal work email' and encouraged the audience to be professional when using emails to communicate. The use of slang was also discouraged. The message should be simple and easy to understand.



Group photo on day one of the workshop

Mr Thompho Makwarela made a presentation that focused on addressing challenges related to common network-related issues. The presentation highlighted network congestion during peak hours, limited coverage in certain areas, and network security vulnerabilities. The proposed solutions and enhancements included upgrading bandwidth and internet connectivity by collaborating with service providers, implementing load-balancing techniques for optimised traffic distribution, and utilising content caching and compression technologies to improve speed and efficiency.

Ms Tondani Raphasha and Mr Frans Matsaung provided an overview regarding the roles of student assistants in computer laboratories and in supporting the University community. "The expectation is that all the computer laboratories should be in good working condition." They also reflected on some issues they experienced concerning supervising student assistants.

Mr Rendani Madzhadzhi reflected on the effects of losing critical information and how

that can be avoided. He demonstrated to the audience how they could back up customers' documents in preparation for reinstalling the operating System.

Mr Nduvho Madzivhandila introduced the student assistants to Huawei programmes. According to him, the programmes will enhance their chances of employability since they are recognised worldwide.

When providing feedback, student assistants mentioned that they had gained a lot and wished the workshop could be extended to the whole University community. They also thanked and appreciated the CFO and the organising team for initiating the event. They promised to be guided by the advice they got from the workshop.

Mr Botwe Kraziya, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and the main speaker during the event, encouraged the student assistants to pursue postgraduate qualifications, enabling them to claim their space in the country successfully and globally. If they want money, critical skill is the route to pursue. He gave an example of cyber security skills,

which are also in high demand. He advised them to approach Financial Aid for financial assistance in case of financial challenges. He also emphasised the need to behave in a manner acceptable in society and at the workplace. He even showed them the link between behaviour and career. Student assistants were also warned about wasting money on things that do not matter for their lives. They were advised to think through and draft a budget before they spend a cent. They should be able to account for the money spent. He guaranteed that if they persistently put efforts towards their career, they would make it. Mr Kraziya commended the ICT department for a job well done and requested that this be a university-wide event.

In his closing remarks, Dr Nkhumbuleni Ratshitanga thanked and appreciated the coordinators of the workshop and everyone who contributed to the workshop's success. He also appreciated the CFO for taking time from his busy schedule to talk to the student assistants.



Group photo on day two of the workshop

UNIVEN partners with Umlambo Foundation to teach foundation phase learners how to read and write



The University of Venda (UNIVEN), through the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education led by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni agreed to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Umlambo Foundation led by the founder, former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka to support the teaching and learning of Accounting, Tshivenda (Home Language), Mathematics and Science, English (First Additional Language) (FAL) through debates, Learning, Reading and Numeracy at Foundation Phase and supporting principals in Leadership and Management of schools in Vhembe District East and West schools.

In this five-year agreement, UNIVEN will assist the Umlambo Foundation by evaluating some of the projects and providing teachers with skills in various areas that the Foundation is conducting.

This unique partnership was cemented on Thursday, 08 June 2023 at UNIVEN Sport Hall.



In his opening and welcome remarks, UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni said this day marks the beginning of a partnership between

UNIVEN and the Umlambo Foundation, under the leadership of Dr Phumzile MlamboNgcuka, the former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa. Dr Nthambeleni indicated that under the direction of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education, UNIVEN will collaborate with the Umlambo Foundation in the chosen education circuits, and this includes 68 principals and 350 teachers.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal pointed out that this partnership is in line with the key objectives of the UNIVEN's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan which seeks to strengthen the University's local, regional and international profile and visibility, through engaged scholarship and building of linkages, partnerships and internationalisation. Dr Nthambeleni further mentioned that UNIVEN subscribes to the belief articulated by the late former President of South Africa,

Nelson Mandela, that "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Dr Nthambeleni outlined some of the key programmes that this partnership will focus on such as School Leadership and Management, Curriculum Support, Debate Series for learners, Digital Literacy, and Coding and Robotics. He said the benefits to be derived from these programmes will include Capacity Building for Principals, Capacitating Principals as Curriculum Managers, Confidence Building Through Public speaking, Capacity Building of Teachers in Lesson Presentations, Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills, and most importantly, Empowering Both the Girl Child and the Boy Child. In his conclusion, Dr Nthambeleni said UNIVEN has already demonstrated its commitment to the partnership by establishing a team of 18 committed members who will participate in the implementation of this initiative.



The Founder of Umlambo Foundation, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka in her response

mentioned that her Foundation through the institutions of Higher Learning such as UNIVEN is responsible for supporting teachers to transform the education system. She said the Foundation is intervening in the Vhembe District East and West in bringing school programmes that are meant to assist schools to perform better and those already performing better to continue performing better.

She indicated that the country is faced with a challenge wherein 81% of children in grade four are unable to read in any language, hence this is a concern to everyone.

Dr Mlambo-Ncuka highlighted that Umlambo Foundation through the support of UNIVEN, has the capacity to support teachers to upskill them so that they could deliver this task of assisting learners to know how to read and write.

She also talked about one programme which she mentioned to be dear to her and she is looking forward to seeing how everyone will execute it, and that is to assist children to speak the languages in their debate sessions, and to articulate, comprehend and express themselves. Dr Mlambo-Ngcuka said this is another intervention which will be undertaken at primary schools where they will be encouraging learners to debate in Tshivenda, while at high schools will be encouraging and assist them to debate in English. Through this initiative, teachers will be teaching learners a lot of concepts from current affairs to climate change, science and technology and social affairs.

"I'm looking forward to a day where we will all come together to celebrate the debate finals of top learners from this district and I hope in our country, tomorrow will be better than yesterday," That was Dr Mlambo-Ngcuka as she concludes.

"I'm looking forward to a day where we will all come together to celebrate the debate finals of top learners from this district and I hope in our country, tomorrow will be better than yesterday,"



Director Legal Services, Adv Eric Nemukula presided over the big moment of the signing ceremony by UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni and Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.



University Registrar, Adv Edward Lambani appreciated and thanked the presence of Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for bringing development to UNIVEN and its communities. He said, "This occasion will always remain cemented in our hearts." Adv Lamabani echoed the sentiments of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal that UNIVEN is an anchor institution not to some, not to all but to any initiative that may ever be established within this region be it pedagogical, be it anthropological, whatever it leads to, as long as it leads to the epistemological development of the people of this region, the University will always be the anchor.

The University Registrar thanked the role played by the Department of Education Vhembe Region, Mr Makakavhule in particular who ensured that indeed education has no age of involvement.

He finally appreciated the Faculty led by Prof Bongani Bantwini who together with his team, grabbed this opportunity and rally behind this initiative.



UNIVEN hosts the 2023 Annual Young Scientists' Conference to advance the sustainable development through basic science research



An aerial view of attendees listening to one of the speakers during the conference

The South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS), in collaboration with the South African Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and the University of Venda (UNIVEN), hosted the 2023 Annual Young Scientists' (AYS) Conference from 12 -13 June 2023 at UNIVEN. The partnership network for the 2023 AYS Conference included Wits Advanced Drug Delivery Platform, Aspen Pharmacare, and Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). This was aligned with the SAYAS strategic planning where partnerships with academia, industry and research councils were emphasised to co-create opportunities to support emerging scientists in South Africa. The primary funders of the conference were ASSAf, UNIVEN and the DSI, whilst Aspen Pharmacare provided additional financial support that allowed ten (10) young scientists to attend the 2023 conference.

The theme for the 2023 conference was 'Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development' with a focus on Innovation in health and biomedical sciences; The climate-water-energy-food nexus; Clean energy and water research; Education and research in basic sciences; Artificial intelligence, machine, and deep learning, and Biodiversity and agriculture. The conference was aligned with the principles of UNESCO's International Year of Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development (IYBSSD) and serves to strengthen the presence and visibility of women, promotes basic sciences as sources of international dialogue and peace for the global public good, and fosters innovation, education, economic and human development to meet global challenges. The 2023 conference has provided an interactive space where 58 young scientists and emerging researchers from over 20 universities and Research Councils across South Africa showcased their research and connected with emerging and established researchers, including all categories of stakeholders from grassroots communities to political decision makers, international leaders, associations, students, and local authorities.

This conference featured keynote speakers such as Prof Fulufhelo Nelwamondo, CEO of the National Research Foundation (NRF);

Dr. Stavros Nicolaou, Group Senior Executive of Aspen Pharmacare; Dr Palesa Sekhejane, Director: Strategic Partnerships at Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC); Prof Nosisi Feza, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Post Graduate Studies at UNIVEN, and Prof Thokozani Majozi, Executive Dean, Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment at the University of Witwatersrand, as well as a forum discussion hosted by SAYAS in collaboration with the South African Chapter of the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD). Pre-conference events included ASSAf Institutional Roadshow.



In his welcome Address, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni highlighted that UNIVEN is honoured to be co-hosting the Academy of Science of South Africa Institutional and Public Engagement Roadshow. Dr Nthambeleni continued to highlight that the 2023 roadshows aim is to engage institutions of higher learning and other science, technology, and innovation institutions nationwide, with the overarching objective of increasing the visibility of ASSAf

and SAYAS, their standing in promoting the value of science in society as well as their activities. He said this event is a testament to the remarkable talent, curiosity, and dedication of the young minds. "Science has always been the catalyst for progress, and it is through the lens of science that we explore the mysteries of the universe, unlock the secrets of nature, and pave the way for a better future."

The SAYAS Conference is a platform that nurtures this spirit of scientific inquiry, fostering a community of young thinkers who will undoubtedly shape the world in the years to come.

Dr Nthambeleni concluded his talk by wishing this conference to be a launchpad for young scientists' aspirations, a safe space for intellectual growth and collaboration.

"Let this conference serve as a reminder that the pursuit of knowledge knows no boundaries and that scientific progress thrives when we come together to share, inspire, and learn from one another."

The South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) was launched in 2011 as the voice of young South African scientists and provides a platform that allows leading young scientists to influence national policy and to co-create strategic initiatives and partnerships for a better tomorrow. SAYAS comprises of early to mid-career researchers with PhD degrees in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) fields. The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) hosts and provides secretariat function for SAYAS.



"Let this conference serve as a reminder that the pursuit of knowledge knows no boundaries and that scientific progress thrives when we come together to share, inspire, and learn from one another."



A group photo of some of the attendees on the first day of the conference

UNIVEN hosts the 2023 Annual Young Scientists' Conference to advance the sustainable development through basic science research continued...



In her keynote message, UNIVEN's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Nosisi Feza said science is about observing the world by watching, listening, and recording. She highlighted that; science curiosity is the desire to seek out answers, consume scientific information just for the pleasure of doing so. "People who are science curious do research because they take satisfaction in seeing what science does to resolve mysteries. We need medical doctors that will confidently say I will help you not those who say I will try."

She advised them to conduct research ethically and to bring solutions to the society. "We need to accelerate technological solutions. We also need to change our mentality of thinking that we are poor. We are not poor."

She further told attendees to teach their students to be creators of opportunities not products that will go out to beg for jobs.



ASSAf Executive Officer, Prof Himla Soodyall thanked UNIVEN for hosting this successful SAYAS- ASSAf Conference. She described ASSAf as a membership organisation. She gave the background of ASSAf and SAYAS where she mentioned that their membership is standing at 698 members. Prof Soodyall further spoke about opportunities that comes with joining these organisations. "We are here to assist each other to finding solutions for this world." Prof Soodyall further detailed the process of electing leadership and the process of nomination. "We also strive for academic excellence," she said.

During the gala dinner that was held at 2Ten Hotel on Tuesday, 13 June 2023, Prof Soodyall said that the executive committee of SAYAS and ASSAf have put science at the front of the agenda. She said SAYAS has brought science into the society because they want communities to benefit from these research that scientists are bringing to them. She concluded by thanking UNIVEN for hosting this event and for their warm welcome.



In his message of support, the Director Strategic Partnerships at the National Research Foundation (NRF), Dr Sepo Hachigonta said if scientists and researchers want to conquer, they need to be part of communities and sometimes they need to collaborate with each other. "We need to ensure that we are always in dialogue with community members. Engage with different stakeholders as researchers. Show them the impact of your research, be able to evaluate your research impact." He further told them to work within their regions more than with international organisations because our regions need solutions to their challenges. "South Africa has made a lot of progress on the issue of sustainable development goals and it's good to see the country progressing in that pace," he said.



In her inspirational talk during the gala dinner that was held at 2Ten, Dr Palesa Sekhejane from HSRC congratulated conveners of this conference for organising such a successful conference. She further thanked the University management for allowing this conference to take place at UNIVEN. Dr Sekhejane described the conference as a platform for young people to put their voices out there. "We are leaning, and this is another way of learning."



Dr Tebogomo Mabotha from ASSAf thanked UNIVEN staff members who made sure that this conference becomes a success. She further thanked the University management for warmly welcoming them to UNIVEN.



Dr Melusi Thwala from ASSAf presented the awards during the evening of the gala dinner.



Prof Shonisani Mulovhedzi gave a welcoming and opening message during the gala dinner. She said she hopes that this conference has strengthened the network of attendees and mentioned that she has no doubt that the attendees have learned a lot from this conference.



Attendees were entertained by Dinaka cultural dance group



A group photo of some of the attendees and participants of the conference



A group photo of gala dinner attendees with award recipients displaying their certificates

University Management declares 2h45 minutes of Physical Wellness Activities for Employees

The University of Venda Human Resources Department under the banner of the Employee Health and Wellness Unit in collaboration with the University's Department of Student Affairs (Sports and Recreation Unit) recently organised the launch of Physical Wellness Activities that will take place every Wednesday of the week from 14:00 to 16:45. This was an initiative by the University of Venda Management that employees should participate in physical wellness activities.

The purpose of this initiative is to promote a healthy lifestyle through physical wellness activities including but not limited to fun walks, aerobics, and traditional games. The duration of the sporting activities shall be 2h45 minutes from 14:00 to 16:45 every Wednesday of the week. However, employees who are not participating shall remain in their offices until the normal University knock-off time. All participating employees will be expected to complete an attendance register for control purposes. The launch took place at UNIVEN Sports Hall on Wednesday, 31 May 2023.



Dr Mutshinyalo Ratombo, representing the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni made a commitment that indeed the decision to launch these physical wellness activities was not a mistake. Dr Ratombo briefly spoke under the topic, 'What is Employee Wellness for the University of Venda Strategic Plan Implementation?' He said there is a direct relationship between employee wellness and institutional operational efficiency. The University management understands that employee wellness is important and that it is considered a means to promote employees' physical and mental fitness and health.

Dr Ratombo pointed out that employee wellness activities are a strong tool for promoting employees' health and helping them to influence their quality of life, mental well-being, and performance at work. He maintains that employee wellness is not only about reducing absenteeism and being absent due to illness but also about proactively encouraging and promoting healthier lifestyles and attitudes among the employees.

The UNIVEN management views employee wellness as an investment for the University because employees are the biggest asset of the institution to deliver on their mandate.

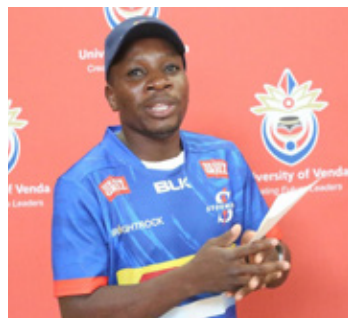
He further said studies have indicated that employees are more likely to be productive when they are in good health.



The Director of Human Resources, Mrs Uanda Ndou encouraged employees who attended the first physical wellness activities to love and take care of their bodies by not only putting on beautiful clothes, make-up and eating junk foods, hence exercising was found as part of a healthy lifestyle. She further encouraged them to respect the time given by the University and use it for the benefit of their health. Mrs Ndou said all these when welcoming employees to this launch.



Partners in physical wellness activities, Sports and Recreation Unit was represented by Patrick Thaba. Mr Thaba said that they are excited to be part of this initiative that aims to improve the health and well-being of employees at the University of Venda. He indicated that their Unit is not only responsible for students' sports activities but also for employees hence they have to come up with programmes that are relevant to employees as well. He reaffirmed their commitment to the success of this initiative. He called upon all the wellness champions to also commit themselves to this initiative.



Dr Percy Mugwedi from Sports and Recreation Unit thanked all the employees in attendance and speakers for honouring this very important programme.



The Head of Employee Relations, Adv Rudzani Makhema facilitated the programme. The programme started with the fun walk which was followed by different activities.

He finally made a call that other employees who were not present should follow suit.



Information Regulator (South Africa) conducts Promotion of Access to Information Act Compliance Assessment at UNIVEN



Adv Eric Nemukula, Mr Fhatuwani Ndou, Ms Sewela Seshoeni, and Ms Kealeboga Mocumi during the compliance assessment meeting

On Thursday, 15 June 2023, a delegation from Information Regulator (South Africa) visited the University of Venda (UNIVEN) to conduct a PAIA (The Promotion of Access to Information Act) Compliance Assessment. This delegation was received by the Director Legal Services, Adv Eric Nemukula and Mr Fhatuwani Ndou who is the Head of Governance and Compliance at UNIVEN.

According to the Compliance and Monitoring Officer at PAIA Information Regulator (South Africa), Ms Sewela Seshoeni, the assessment was conducted with ease through the assistance of Adv Mphiriseni Irene Mukwevho-Netangaheni and Adv Eric Nemukula who were prompt in responding to their notice to conduct the assessment on the institution and confirming their availability. She indicated that an Assessment Report will be made available to the University at the right time. This was the first time they conduct these PAIA compliance assessments at various institutions of higher learning.

Ms Seshoeni further mentioned that, as part of their APP (Annual Performance Plan) in this

first quarter of the financial year 2023/2024, they will be conducting assessments on public universities. Apart from UNIVEN, the Information Regulator (South Africa) delegation has already visited the following universities: University of the Witwatersrand, University of Cape Town, University of



Mr Fhatuwani Ndou, Ms Sewela Seshoeni, Ms Kealeboga Mocumi and Adv Eric Nemukula

Johannesburg, Fort Hare University, Rhodes University, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, University of Mpumalanga, and the University of Limpopo.

The Information Regulator (South Africa) is an independent body established in terms of section 39 of the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013. It is subject only to the law and the constitution and it is accountable to the national assembly.

The information regulator is, among others, empowered to monitor and enforce compliance by public and private bodies with the provisions of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act 2 of 2000), and the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act 4 of 2013).

In response, Adv Nemukula indicated that he hesitantly confirmed the visit as there is always a perception that a visit by the office of the Information Regulator for assessment, would result in institutions receiving fines for non-compliance with the Act. However, he confirmed that the visit was necessary and informative as he now knows that although the institution was doing well on PAIA compliance, there are also areas that require improvements and those are the areas the Director Legal Services working together with Head Governance and Compliance will be focussing on.

"It is good news that through this visit, UNIVEN has been able to build a good working relationship with the office of the Information Regulator and the delegation committed to offer support to UNIVEN in putting together a compliant PAIA manual. UNIVEN is so grateful for the visit and looking forward to receiving positive feedback from the office of the Information Regulator."

We would like to hear from you!

Nendila is your communication channel.

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