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University of Venda
Creating future leaders

A special word of welcome to staff and students during the Official Opening of the 2024 academic year



Awards recipients displaying the awarded certificates and trophies

On Monday, 05 February 2024, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda (UNIVEN), Prof Bernard Nthambeleni officially opened the 2024 academic year in an event that took place at the University Stadium. A special word of welcome was extended to the first-time entering students who made UNIVEN a university of their choice. "I hope that you will take full advantage of the opportunities presented to you and to successfully complete your degree programmes within the stipulated period," expressed the Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

The official opening ceremony marked the commencement of the 2024 academic year of the University. However, at its special meeting on 05 February 2024, the Executive Committee of Senate, SENEX resolved that the commencement of 2024 University academic activities should be postponed from Monday, 05 February 2024, to Monday, 12 February 2024, to allow the processes of admission and registration for first entering students and the allocation of rooms for offcampus residences to be finalised. Classes will then commence on Monday, 12 February 2024. This does not apply to classes relating to the Faculty of Health Sciences, which have already commenced.

The official opening was followed by the Vice-Chancellor's Annual Student Academic Excellence Awards that are meant to celebrate the top academic student achievers

and present them with certificates, cash awards and trophies. These are well deserved awards in recognition of many long hours spent studying.



Prof Nthambeleni maintained that it is common knowledge that we are a rural-based University with its own unique offering to various stakeholders and giving us a competitive edge for teaching and learning, research, and community engagement opportunities. Outcomes from these experiences remain channelled to maximise our profile and positioning.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal said, "With concerted efforts, internally as teams, and externally with various stakeholders, UNIVEN has great potential to achieve the perceived role of an "entrepreneurial university." Our muscle lies in all our stakeholders, students, staff, alumni, donors, media, and

communities that we serve. Our adopted performance plans give details to the extent in which we are tasked to influence outcomes of our strategic objectives. We are grateful of our involvement in the reconfiguration of the development within our province."

He further indicated that our University is guided by the Strategic Plan (2021-2025) to prepare graduates that are locally relevant but globally competitive to ensure that we are positioned for impact and relevance.

He reported that over the past 40 years, the University has produced many icons and captains of various industries. "We boast success in our slogan "creating future leaders," and still hope to do this with great pride."

Having been ranked among the top universities in South Africa, our aim is to raise the bar in various aspects of University management, with the determination to make UNIVEN one of the top universities by 2030. We are harnessing all available opportunities to grow our offering in the Science, Engineering and Agriculture taking advantage of our locality in terms of niche offering.

Prof Nthambeleni thanked everyone for all their efforts throughout the 2023 academic year. "The success of our University is built on your efforts as dedicated staff, the many successes we have seen and enjoyed is due to you."

Read inside

A special word of welcome to staff and students during the Official Opening of the 2024 academic year 1

Researchers meet to strategise on how to reduce the over-reliance on chemical pesticides 3

University of Venda is ready for the 2024 academic year 3

Meet the University of Venda's New Director of Grants Management - Dr Phillia Vukea 6

Department of Marketing, Branding and Communication has a new Schools Liaison Officer 6

Bronze Medal for UNIVEN FC 7

A special word of welcome to staff and students during the Official Opening of the 2024 academic year continued..

He expressly commended the University management and student leadership stating, "students concerns are always a high priority for the University executive management."

Furthermore, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal gave a reflection and presented the analysis of the University performance over the past year. "Our staff, students and other strategic stakeholders have shown faith and commitment in making UNIVEN to achieve all the greater milestones."

In some of the notable achievements, Prof Nthambeleni noted a host of successes and research awards earned by UNIVEN 125 researchers who are doing exceptionally well in research, teaching, and learning as well as community engagement. These academic staff members and researchers were awarded during the University's 2023 Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards ceremony that took place in September 2023. The excellence awards aim to recognize staff who have delivered exceptional, professional service and are further intended to encourage performance excellence.

Additionally, Prof Nthambeleni reported that a considerable major progress had been made in terms of infrastructure development.

The Vice Chancellor and Principal continued to highlight that this year, 2024, UNIVEN will embark on the development of the new Strategic Plan with engagements of internal and external stakeholders. This new Strategic Plan will be effective from 2026 to 2030 and will take account the deliverables of the UNIVEN Integration Entrepreneurship and Innovation Biodiversity Plan (UIEIBP).



Director of Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL), Dr Lindiwe Mulaudzi gave a brief background of the Vice-Chancellor's Student Academic Excellence Awards. The prizes were awarded to the following categories: First year, Second- and Third-year students. In terms of prizes, recipients received cash, certificate and a trophy.



A second-year student in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Mr Ditshepiso Daniel Mamabolo who is doing BSc in Biochemistry and Microbiology was announced the Best Overall student performer of the 2023 Vice-Chancellor's Student Academic Excellence Awards. He was doing ten modules. In his response, Mamabolo said he had set goals for himself that he wants to produce the best results on his academic record. He advised the first entering students to always aim to be the best version of themselves, "set goals for

yourselves and work towards achieving those goals. This achievement has taught me that nothing is impossible in life," he said.

The main aim for the awards is to promote the culture of teaching and learning in all faculties. The awards are a recognition of hard work by both students and lecturers. These awards are awarded to students at the beginning of every academic year. This is to honour students' outstanding performance of the previous year and to motivate all students to aim for the stars.



DVC Teaching and Learning, Prof Eucebious Lekalakala-Mokgele together with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal presided over these awards.



DVC Research and Postgraduate Studies concurred with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal that we should all embrace diversity and that there is nothing that we can achieve without loving one another.

The official opening event was impressive because of the performance by the UNIVEN choir led by Dr Meisie Masakona-Madzivhandila.



Attendees of the Official Opening of the 2024 Academic Year



UNIVEN Choir led by Dr Meisie Masakona-Madzivhandila

Researchers meet to strategise on how to reduce the over-reliance on chemical pesticides



Participants of the UNIVEN/ICGEB Workshop

Weeds, including invasive alien plant species, remain a significant constraint to food production and a major threat to biodiversity in the country. Even though chemical pesticides (including herbicides) have played a significant role in pest control over the years, the misuse or overuse of these products may pose challenges. It is for this reason that the University of Venda's Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture (FSEA) in collaboration with the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) held a workshop

on Biocontrol of pests, weeds, and invasive alien species in South Africa: Strategies, opportunities, and challenges. This workshop was held on 30 January – 01 February 2024 at the Agriculture's New Hall. The FSEA Executive Dean, Prof Natasha Potgieter, is very proud of this initiative which falls within the UNIVEN Integrated Entrepreneurship Innovation and Biodiversity Plan (UIEIBP).

Researchers from UNIVEN, together with the afore-mentioned stakeholders saw a need to reduce the over-reliance on chemical pesticides by developing and promoting complementary non-synthetic

pest control methods. Research has shown that using biological control (biocontrol) agents remains the most sustainable way of controlling invasive alien species. This workshop has covered the developments over the years in the biological control of specific problematic weeds, focussing on the successes and challenges that could inform the development of more effective biological control strategies for other problematic pests, weeds, and invasive alien plant species, especially in South Africa. The constraints to the widespread use of biocontrol agents (and bioherbicides), and how these could be best

addressed, were also discussed during the workshop.

Participants of this workshop were coming from the Department of Science and Innovation; International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology; Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization; Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, South African National Biodiversity Institute; National Biological Control Release Application Review Committee; Modderfontein Laboratory Services and Rhodes University.

University of Venda is ready for the 2024 academic year



First entering students who attended the 2024 Official Opening of the Orientation Programme

On Wednesday, 31 January 2024, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, Prof Eucebious Lekalakala-Mokgele officially opened the 2024 Student Orientation programme. This was to acclimatise first entering students to the University environment. The orientation programme is a critical programme that assists first entering students to feel that they are part of the University and increases student engagement and loyalty. This UNIVEN 2024 Official Opening of the Orientation took place at the University Stadium.

UNIVEN received almost 100 000 applications for enrolment in the 2024 academic year, however, the University could only admit 3600 undergraduate applicants.

University of Venda is ready for the 2024 academic year continued..



In her official opening address, the DVC Teaching and Learning, Prof Lekalakala-Mokgele gave a warm and spirited welcome to the first entering students who were gathered at the stadium. She said, "Today marks the commencement of an extraordinary adventure—a journey into the world of higher education that promises both challenges and triumphs." Prof Lekalakala-Mokgele continued to say that "You stand at the threshold of a significant chapter in your lives, and I am honoured to be here with you as you take your first steps into the world of academia. This is not just a university; it is a realm of opportunities, a place where dreams find wings."

She further indicated that "As you set foot on this campus, remember that you are not just students; you are seekers of knowledge, pioneers of your futures. This university is not just a collection of buildings; it is a community where ideas flourish, friendships blossom, and discoveries are made."

Prof Lekalakala-Mokgele told the students that the University of Venda thrives on diversity—a diversity of thought, background, and experiences. In addition, she pointed that "we hope you will make this moment a memorable one because that is where you will be creating your future. Your time here is about aspirations, you will account new ideas and come across many challenges. Collaborate and forge relationship that will last. Remember, these resources are here to enhance your knowledge. Connect with your peers and do what you are here for." She wished them a successful academic journey at UNIVEN.



In her Welcome Address, the DVC Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Nosisi Feza told first years that their future is in their hands. "Your student life starts now. You are responsible for making it happen. Make us proud because you are our future." Prof Feza advised them to read because that is a way of acquiring knowledge. "When you need help, do not die alone, seek help. Take care of yourself and do not put yourself in a vulnerable situation. Always be mindful and be careful." Learn to understand when you study, do not memorise what you read about. She told them the fact that they have made it this far, is because they are able, and they must keep on believing that they will pass their degrees on record time. "Make 2024 a turning point of your life", added Prof Feza.



Student Representative Council (SRC) President, Mr John Ndaka welcomed new students who made UNIVEN their University of choice. He congratulated them for making it thus far and that they are lucky because the space is limited. "We are here to assist you with all the issues that you come across and your challenges will be addressed. We are here to create future leaders." He advised first years to study because that is the only way to pass. "Never forget where you come from. Do what you are here for and change the situation at home," said the SRC President.



SRC President was followed by the Director Human Resources, Mrs Uanda Ndou who, as a mother, gave advice to students' issues pertaining to Occupational Health and Safety as well as Gender Based Violence (GBV).

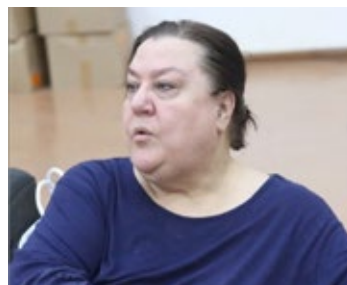
Various speakers including the Faculty Managers orientated first entering students about the programmes and services that are offered in their respective faculties.

There were also addresses coming from different departments, directorates, and centres. Different directors shared information about their services as well as procedures and processes on how their respective departments operate. Some of the departments which gave their presentations include Revenue and Financial Aid, Community Engagement, International Relations and Partnerships, Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL), Student Affairs, Legal Services as well as Centre for Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation.

The Official Opening of Student Orientation was followed by faculties and departments specific orientation.



University Registrar, Dr Joel Baloyi expressed a vote of thanks. He said "Aim and tell yourself that you will finish what you have started. Make sure that you have a memorable student life. You can make the best out of the opportunity that has been given to you. Leave your own mark."



University of Venda is ready for the 2024 academic year continued..



Meet the University of Venda's New Director of Grants Management - Dr Phillia Vukea



The Office of the CFO welcomes Dr Phillia Vukea, who joined the University of Venda (UNIVEN) on 01 January 2024 as Director of the newly formed Grants Management office.

UNIVEN receives 9% of its revenue through various grants from the public and private sectors. These grants are granted to achieve specific outcomes which are delivered as projects. The grantors have various spending and reporting requirements. The purpose of this office is to monitor and coordinate all grant activities at UNIVEN centrally to achieve successful implementation of grant-funded projects. This office will also advise the university community on the optimal use of grant funds.

Dr Vukea has extensive knowledge of the legislative and policy framework of the South African higher education sector, including funding higher education institutions. She has held several key positions at the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), including as Director of Governance Support, Deputy Director of Institutional Support and Sector Liaison, Acting Director of Institutional Support and Sector Liaison, and a Lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her extensive experience in governance, institutional support, and

academia reflects her multifaceted skill set and deep understanding of the higher education landscape.

Dr Vukea is a distinguished professional and member of the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP). She earned her BSc and BSc Honours in Genetics and obtained her PhD in Biochemistry from the University of KwaZulu Natal, showcasing her commitment to academic excellence and research.

UNIVEN's Chief Financial Officer, Mr Botwe Kraziya, congratulates Dr Vukea on her appointment and has pledged his support to ensure the success of this office. He further urges the University community to support Dr Vukea in her new role as Director of Grants Management.

The University Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, said, "Dr Vukea's extraordinary abilities and skills will benefit the entire University as well as our Grants Management team. It gives me great pleasure to welcome her at the University of Venda. We do not doubt that she will succeed, produce outcomes, and make us all proud.

Department of Marketing, Branding and Communication has a new Schools Liaison Officer



Mr Mphinyana Nemasitoni

The University of Venda's (UNIVEN) Department of Marketing, Branding and Communication is delighted to announce the appointment of Mr Mphinyana Nemasitoni as the new Schools Liaison Officer with effect from 01 January 2024.

Mr Nemasitoni's academic qualifications include a BA in Media Studies from the University of Venda, a testament to his commitment to learning and growth. Further solidifying his knowledge, he d a BA Honours in Advanced Corporate Communications

from North-West University.

Over the years, his professional path has woven through various aspects of communications, branding, stakeholder relations, marketing management, career development, advisory, events management, and media relations. He takes pride in both accreditation in good standing as a Chartered Public Relations Practitioner (CPRP) by PRISA and a Career Development Practitioner (CDP) with SACDA, reflecting his dedication to maintaining the highest standards in his field. Throughout his career, he played a pivotal role in developing and executing comprehensive communication plans and seamlessly integrating marketing strategies. Notably, his expertise extends to website management and content development, social media management, project management, marketing stakeholder management and recruitment.

Before rejoining UNIVEN, Mr Nemasitoni had a privilege of contributing to the university's success in the past, particularly in the Office of Media and Publications of the Department of Marketing, Branding and Communication as an intern. His career journey also led him to the private sector, where he served as a Media and Sales Liaison Practitioner at B.O.M.O Media Entertainment and as the Head of Events Management and Stakeholder Engagement at G4Brothers Group for the prestigious National SATMA AWARDS project.

When Nemasitoni joined the North-West University, he worked as the Campus Liaison Officer for the Career Centre department wherein he successfully managed the campus division and coordinated its communication and marketing strategy, events, stakeholder engagement and amongst others, actively shaped the career path of students, fostering

a symbiotic relationship between the academia and external industry.

Prior to rejoining UNIVEN, he was holding two positions at North-West University as the Senior Liaison Officer for Corporate Communications, wherein he had the privilege of managing communication and marketing division for the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences across all three NWU campuses. Simultaneously, Mr Nemasitoni was holding a supplementary position of being the House Parent in the Student Life department, managing the University residence as well as affairs of on-campus accommodated students.

"Congratulations and welcome to the great team! We believe that a dedicated team can accomplish a lot of goals. When working together as a team, we will exceed what an individual can achieve alone," says the Director of Marketing, Branding and Communication, Dr Takalani Dzaga as he welcomes Mr Nemasitoni.

Dr Dzaga urges the University Community to give Mr Nemasitoni the necessary support in his new role.

"We believe that a dedicated team can accomplish a lot of goals."

Bronze Medal for UNIVEN FC



UNIVEN FC was rewarded with a bronze medal for obtaining 3rd position at the USSA tournament

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) Football Club is a University Sport South Africa (USSA) affiliated club. This UNIVEN FC male team was recently crowned a Bronze Medal after obtaining the third position.

The team is currently being coached by Mr Anzani Mululuma and Mr Lusani Randima is his Assistant. The afore-mentioned coach and his assistant are full time academic staff members of the University of Venda with great passion in football development. They contribute towards the success of the University of Venda.

UNIVEN Male Football Club played a total of 6 games under the B-Section wherein the results were as follows:



Mr Mululuma (right) and Mr L Randima (left) with bronze medals

Date	Fixture	Results
04-12-2023	UNIVEN F.C 1 vs Varsity College 1	UNIVEN F.C drew by 1-1
04-12-2023	UNIVEN F.C 2 vs NUST 0	UNIVEN F.C won by 2-0
05-12-2023	UNIVEN F.C 1 vs UL 0	UNIVEN F.C won by 1-0
06-12-2023	UNIVEN F.C 1 vs UCT 1	UNIVEN F.C drew by 1-1
07-12-2023	UNIVEN F.C 0 vs Maties F.C 2 (semi-final)	UNIVEN Lost and proceed to play for 3rd position loser's final
08-12-2023	UNIVEN 2 – UCT 0 (3rd place play-offs)	UNIVEN won, obtain 3rd position and awarded bronze medal.

The results got UNIVEN FC male team to secure promotion to play in the A-Section in 2024 and with the possibilities of qualifying to compete at Varsity Cup in 2025 should the team perform well and obtain any spot in the top 8 position

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus - contact the University Hotline by calling toll free number **0800 212 755 or email: **univenhotline@tip-offs.com****

Improper conduct includes the following...

- 1. Financial misconduct,**
- 2. Misuse or misappropriation of University assets,**
- 3. Health and safety risks,**
- 4. Plagiarism,**
- 5. Fraud and corruption.**

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