

Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA



University of Venda
Creating future leaders

UNIVEN plays a crucial role in preparing young people to drive change and deliver sustained development



On photo: US Ambassador to South Africa, His Excellency Ambassador Reuben E. Brigety II

On Tuesday, 16 April 2024, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) hosted US Ambassador to South Africa, His Excellency Ambassador Reuben E. Brigety II who delivered a Public Lecture titled "The U.S.-South Africa Relationship - Limpopo Rothe". The Public Lecture took place at the Agriculture Theatre Lecture Hall Building.

In his talk, the Ambassador discussed his visit to the University of Venda and the importance of education in the Republic of South Africa. He felt at home and appreciated the gracious hospitality he received from the University. "Thank you very much for welcoming me to Venda and to this remarkable part of the great country, Republic of South Africa," said the Ambassador. He also underscored the importance of Thohoyandou in Limpopo and the rest of South Africa to the United States of America. Brigety II believes that the relationship between South Africa and the United States is unique, due to the shared values and history of the two nations. These principles, such as respect for human dignity and the notion that everyone has a role in democracy, drive investments

in both people and communities. He further discussed the principles and ideals that link South Africa and the United States through the lens of their past, present, and possibly future investments in their bilateral relationship with South Africa, which will have an impact on the Province of Limpopo. He stated that United States has supported 19 preservation and conservation projects across South Africa, investing nearly 27 million rand. These projects include the Mapungubwe Cultural landscape, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Mapungubwe archive, and map of the Mapungubwe collection. The partnership with the University of Venda demonstrates the importance of education in promoting democracy and civil society. The Ambassador referred to his President Joe Biden who said, "The work of democracy is never finished, democracy demands full and equal participation by all, all our citizens."

Universities like UNIVEN play a crucial role in preparing young people to drive change and progress and he said "Higher education institutions should drive innovation and serve as pillars of their communities."



On photo: The US Ambassador poses for a photo with the University Senior Management and the audience.

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This is certainly the case here at UNIVEN, where even your motto, creating future leaders, demonstrates how the University should be contributing to progress in society." Their scholarship contributes to advancing shared objectives of inclusive economic development and building climate resilience, particularly in rural areas like Limpopo. The US-South Africa Higher Education Network has seen connections between UNIVEN and its partners abroad through the Fulbright Fellowship programme. Two recent UNIVEN fellows who are alumni of Fulbright programme, Professors Joseph Baloyi and Jude Odhiambo, conducted research and advised graduate students in the United States, forming agreements between UNIVEN and their US host institutions, the University of Georgia and Florida International University. Their support will enhance rural development and aid in climate change adaptation efforts. These scholars work in animal and soil sciences as well as the faculty in student exchanges between Americans and South Africans which set their respective agreement. They are prime examples of what educational and cultural exchanges between two democracies can achieve when we invest in our people and those principles and ideals that bind the United States and South Africa together.

As South Africa celebrates 30 years of democracy, the United States stands with its students, emphasising the importance of full and equal participation in democracy. As a changemaker, Ms Ndalamo Hope Siaga, a UNIVEN student and SUSI alumna, stands out for her commitment to civic engagement. She led non-profit efforts to support disadvantaged learners and founded the Western Media Foundation, promoting youth skills development in rural areas. As one of 20 participants from Southern Africa, Hope attended workshops, civil rights courses, and lived with American host families to gain a broader understanding of civic engagement.



On photo: Dr Joel Baloyi

When expressing a vote of thanks the University Registrar, Dr Joel Baloyi commended participants for their robust and vibrant engagement, highlighting the University's mission to produce graduates that are locally relevant and globally competitive.



On photo: Prof Nosisi Feza

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Nosisi Feza, praised UNIVEN for hosting the US Ambassador and emphasised the strong relationship between the US and South Africa, particularly in providing scholarships to students. She appreciated the mutual engagement between UNIVEN and the US, demonstrating respect and understanding. She also acknowledged the presence of representatives from the Limpopo Premier's Office, Mr Ndivhuwo Phathela, Director: International Relations and Mr Ndivhuwo Madzusa, Deputy Director: International Relations.



On photo: Ms Ndalamo Hope Siaga when introducing the US Ambassador to South Africa



On photo L-R: University Registrar, Dr Joel Baloyi and His Excellency Ambassador Reuben E. Brigety II during the interview at UNIVEN FM

The launch of the UNIVEN Beekeeping Academy to benefit staff, students and surrounding communities



Mems Ramaila (left), packaged honey (middle) and Adv Gumbi (right) at UNIVEN Research Conference Centre during the Bee Academy Launch

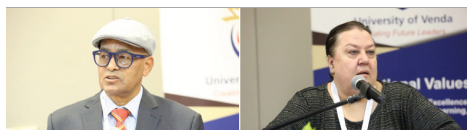
The University of Venda (UNIVEN) in partnership with Bee African launched the UNIVEN Beekeeping Academy at the University's Research Conference Centre on 17 April 2024. This Beekeeping Academy was launched to educate students, staff, and the surrounding communities about the importance of bees and how to make a living from products coming from bees.

Speaking at the Launch, UNIVEN Chancellor, Adv Mojanku Gumbi said UNIVEN is in support of the launch of this academy. She thanked the founder of Bee African (Mems Ramaila) for trusting UNIVEN with this project. Adv Gumbi underscored that there is a need to develop systems that will address the goals to be achieved through this academy. "We must be able to show a little more than what we do every day. Every day in your life there is an opportunity to give a little into somebody else's life. We need to be our brothers' keepers." She mentioned that there is nothing more satisfying than to put even a smile on someone's face. "UNIVEN is ready to make this project a success." Adv Gumbi advised the founder of Bee African, UNIVEN staff, students, and attendees not to give up irrespective of challenges that they come across. She concluded her address by encouraging attendees to embrace this initiative.

The founder of Bee Academy, Mems Ramaila said bees play an incredibly significant role in the ecosystem. "They play a significant role in food production." She continued to tell the attendees that there are five more products from bees, namely honey, royal jelly, beeswax, bee pollen, and propolis. She said honey is also important in the pharmaceutical industry, they also generate bee venom that is used to produce certain medicines. When speaking about the outline of the Academy programme, Ramaila said the Sustainable Beekeeping and Entrepreneurship Short Learning Programme has a Pan-African orientation and offers five modules, namely the Fundamentals of Beekeeping; Setting up an Apiary and Bee Products; Bee Diseases and Pest Control; Beekeeping Entrepreneurship and Honey Extraction; and A Day with the Bees. She said there will also be practicals based on the area of specialisation.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Corporate Services, Dr Robert Martin said the UNIVEN Strategic Plan 2021-2025 focuses on positioning the University for relevance and making impact. "We want to be a world class University that transforms our society and empowers people from the surrounding communities. We need to continue to contribute

to our Biosphere. This programme fits directly into the direction of the Strategic Plan of this University. We have a focus on a wider scale, and we will be expanding this academy soon. From here we will infuse this Bee Academy programme into the academic programme of the University. With this launch we will be impacting the world from Thohoyandou."

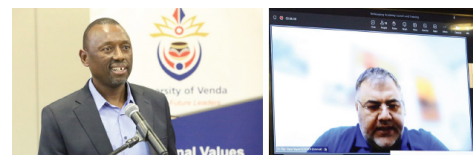


The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Prof Natasha Potgieter (on the right photo above) said this project fits perfectly in our Strategic Plan 2021-2025. It will not only benefit the University but also assist communities to make a living out of what they would have learned from this Academy. She said they can even start businesses in the honey production field. "Honey can be used in various ways and has high impact in food production value chain. There is huge possibility on research that can be conducted on bees." She encouraged attendees to get involved in this project, because a lot of people will benefit from it.



A representative from Tshidzivhe Community, Mr Philemon Ratshilumela Mashila (on the left photo) said there is a beekeeping project that is currently underway at Tshidzivhe. Mr Mashila further encouraged people to start doing business on beekeeping because there is shortage of honey supply in the world. In his Message of support Mr Mukundi Mushaphi, Vhembe District Municipality Local Economic Development Manager (on the right photo) said programmes of this nature are meant to empower our communities. He said this project will assist our people to preserve our nature. "We are prepared to support this project and the establishment of this academy."

Prof Oyesi Vysel Suzerer of Bingol University in Turkey (on the right photo) shared a comprehensive presentation about Bingol University and a Beekeeping programme as well as the products



that they produce from honey which are on the shelves of supermarkets across the globe.

They produce several products from the honey, and they also supply several companies with honey bees for the production of several products. He committed to work with the University of Venda in Beekeeping programme.

Mr Motlatjo Makaepa from Gauteng Province Department of Agriculture (on the left photo above) said Biodiversity is especially important. "We will continue to support entrepreneurs in Agriculture, especially those who are preserving our nature. The bee keeping industry needs a lot of women and we encourage women to enter this space and make a living out of it." Mr Makaepa continued to mention that there is shortage of honey producers locally and internationally. Limpopo will soon be one of the leading provinces that are supplying honey or in beekeeping business. He thanked Bee African for this initiative that will empower this country economically. "Beekeeping is also important in the production of pharmaceutical and cosmetic products. We are always available to support this Beekeeping Academy," he said.



In his message of support, the President of UNIVEN Convocation, Mr Sylvester Motadi (on the left photo) said the world is teaching us to acclimatise ourselves to the direction that the world takes us into. He said when the concept was introduced to them at its infant stage, they decided to fully support this initiative. "Like any other project, this project needs to be nurtured," said Mr Motadi. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Nosisi Feza (on the right photo above) advised attendees to commit into this project and make sure that it becomes a success. "We need projects like this to boost the economy of our villages. If we do not work on the village economy now, there is no one who will do it for us. We need to go to the villages to learn from village people because they know better than me and you. We should not allow people from elsewhere to come and steal our knowledge and ideas and make money out of us using the same information or knowledge that we had." Prof Feza said this beekeeping programme should be added into the programmes of the University.



BeeAfrican Founder (Mems Ramaila) and her team conducted the Sustainable Beekeeping Entrepreneurship Short Learning Programme from 17 until Friday 19 April 2024. The launch was preceded by a networking dinner that took place at 2Ten Hotel.

Reflecting on 30 years of democracy and unpacking upcoming general elections

On 03 April 2024, the University of Venda Convocation held its first-ever webinar titled *'Reflecting on 30 years of democracy and unpacking the upcoming general elections: Who will step into the Union Building's door?'* The purpose of the webinar was to break down the basic concerns about the 2024 upcoming elections and politics in general. The well-attended webinar was graced by the presence of the President of Convocation, Mr Sylvester Motadi, the Director of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation, Prof Vhonani Netshandama, the Director of Marketing, Branding and Communication, Dr Takalani Dzaga, members of EXCO of Convocation, Alumni Chapters, Alumni, UNIVEN staff and students, diplomats from various countries and many other dignitaries.

The eminent panelists were Prof Kgothatso Shai, Mr Thivhilaeli Makatu and Dr Levy Ndou. The webinar discussed South Africa's democratic progress since the transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994, focusing on the gains, losses and upcoming elections and their potential impact on the country's diplomatic relations and political fortunes. In welcoming the audience, Prof Netshandama commended the Convocation leadership for organising the webinar on the current pressing issues of politics and elections. She described a university as a place where reflective thinking is a culture and a vehicle for engaged scholarship.

In his presentation, the SAAPAM President and UNIVEN alumnus, Prof Kgothatso Shai took an angle on the electoral dominance of the ANC in the national political landscape. "The 2024 General Elections will serve as a litmus test for the ANC if they continue political dominance as Africa's democracies regressed when they reached the third decade", said Prof Shai. He concluded by appreciating the remarkable achievements of the ANC government despite increased levels of crime, corruption, and state capture.



In amplifying the voice of South Africa in the international arena, the former diplomat and UNIVEN alumnus, Mr Makatu, applauded the South African government led by one of UNIVEN's luminaries and alumnus, Mr Ronald Lamola, by taking Israel to the International Criminal Court for their alleged genocidal acts against Palestine. He highlighted that South Africa and 63 other countries around the world would be holding elections in 2024, which is a sign of the maturing of democracies.



A well-known political analyst and an alumnus of the University of Venda, Dr Levy Ndou, gave an overview of the current political dynamics characterised by the launch of almost identical manifestos with jobs, electricity, water, corruption, and education among their priorities. "The ANC made considerable progress on its transformative agenda but also scored its own goals, which led to the emergence of many new political parties," said Dr Ndou.

During discussions, several issues were raised, including political socialisation to young voters, campus voting power and community voting power, identical manifestos, new political entrants, anxieties, and uncertainties on the outcomes of elections and political dominance. Some critical issues that might influence election outcomes include voter turnout, media coverage, personality cults, propaganda, voter apathy, and provincial dynamics.

The Director of Marketing, Branding and Communication, Dr Dzaga proposed a vote of thanks and closure. In his vote of thanks and closing remarks, Dr Dzaga praised and appreciated the leadership of Convocation for the wonderful initiative which brought together all generations of the University of Venda alumni, staff, students, and diplomats. He expressed gratitude to the facilitator and panelists for ensuring the webinar's success.

The webinar was facilitated by the Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Prof Patrick Dzimiri.



President of Convocation, Mr Sylvester Motadi (Pictured)

SAICA and Standard Bank partner to fuel the dreams of aspiring chartered accountants



The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) and Standard Bank launched a new Historically Disadvantaged Institutions' (HDIs) partnership project that will help students from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in the field of Chartered Accountancy. The launch of this project took place on Thursday, 25 April 2024 at the UNIVEN Student Parliament. The project is designed to empower students and transform their lives and aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for quality education and decent work and economic growth.

Through this partnership, Standard Bank will fund fourth year BCom Accounting Sciences students at UNIVEN, providing them with the all-inclusive support they need to pursue their dreams and achieve success in the accountancy profession.

When welcoming attendees of the launch, the Interim Director of School of Law, Prof Lonias Ndlovu (on the photo above) reminded the audience that most of students who attended the event are beneficiaries of SAICA's Thuthuka Programme. He further shared that UNIVEN is guided by its Strategic Plan 2021-2025 alongside 4 Strategic Thrusts and 15 Strategic objectives. "If you look at the UNIVEN Strategic Plan 2021-2025, Strategic Objectives 1 to 4 fit well within this funding project", Prof Ndlovu said.



SAICA Executive responsible for Stakeholder Engagement and Transformational Projects, Ms Gugu Makhanya (on the photo) opened her talk by thanking UNIVEN leadership for their commitment and the drive to create future leaders. Ms Makhanya told students that the future is in their hands and advised them to make use of

this opportunity. Ms Makhanya also had the following to say: "One particular milestone is the undergraduate programme accreditation which we have already celebrated at UNIVEN, and we are coming back to celebrate the Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting Accreditation soon. We know UNIVEN will not disappoint because we have seen the achievements of this University over the years." Gugu further thanked Standard Bank, represented by Thembeke, for believing in SAICA's Thuthuka to drive the HDIs' funding initiative



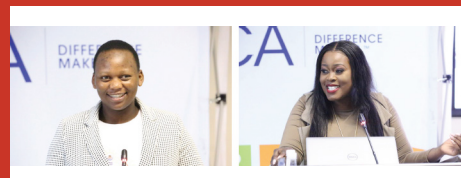
The Standard Bank's Executive Group Head of Finance, Ms Thembeke Maseko (on the photo above), said it has never been an easy journey for them to be finally partnering with SAICA. She indicated that there are lot of historically disadvantaged young people out there who need financial assistance in order to shine and Standard Bank exists to assist those who need their assistance.

Ms Maseko stated that there are many more young people who do not make it to the end of their dream, not because they did not work hard enough, but because they just did not have the privilege to do so. Ms Maseko had this to say further: "A key challenge that our continent faces is financial inclusion. This is something we are passionate about and underpins all we do as an organisation. Our aspiration is to be the enablers of wealth creation and preservation to ensure each generation is better off than the previous one for all Africans. We headed this call to do what we can to ensure the fair inclusion of all in this profession." She concluded her remarks by highlighting that they chose the CA qualification because it plays a critical role in business and in sustaining our economy.



The Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning, Prof Tharien van der Walt (on the photo above) thanked SAICA and Standard

Bank for their partnership which will also help UNIVEN students. She said UNIVEN students deserve this huge opportunity because they are dedicated to their studies, and they work hard. Prof Van der Walt told students to treasure this opportunity because not many students are privileged to get same. In her conclusion, Prof Van der Walt said: "Your journey is like no one others; your gift must be used but not only by yourself but by the communities where you come from."



Representing fourth level students, Ms Senani Tshidumo (on the left photo), thanked partners (SAICA and Standard Bank) for partnership that is meant to benefit students to build their bright future. She further thanked SAICA and Standard Bank for their support.

The programme was facilitated by Mrs Mutondi Ramaru CA (SA) (on the right photo), a Senior Lecturer and Subject Head-Financial Accounting, Department of Accountancy.



In his Vote of thanks, the newly appointed Head of the Department of Accountancy, Prof Freddy Munzhelele (on the photo above) urged students to study hard and to never give up in their studies. He indicated that this is a very demanding field but once they pass and complete their studies, they will never regret because they would have been sorted for the rest of their lives. He acknowledged SAICA and Standard Bank for availing this opportunity to students; and thanked them for assisting UNIVEN in its quest to offer highly regarded accounting programmes. Prof Munzhelele also thanked Standard Bank for their generosity.

The University of Venda and Green Technology Confucius Institute celebrate International Chinese Language Day



The International Chinese Language Day is observed annually on April 20. This event was established by the United Nations (UN) Department of Public Information in 2010 to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity, as well as to promote equal use of all six of its official working languages throughout the United Nations. On this day, people honour the Chinese language and its rich history. The Chinese Language Day was selected from Guyu (which translates to "Rain of Millet"), the 6th of 24 solar terms in traditional Chinese calendars.

It is for this reason that Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTICI) at the University of Venda created a platform to celebrate this day. The celebration took place at the Faculty of Health Sciences on Friday, 19 April 2024.



The Director Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation, Dr Mutshinyalo Ratombo (on the left photo), officially opened the International Chinese Language Day celebration at UNIVEN. When welcoming new students who are participating in Chinese language class, lecturers, and distinguished guests, he mentioned that the University of Venda's Memorandum of Understanding with Hubei University of Technology was signed in 2019, which led to the launch of the Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTICI) in December 2023. Dr Ratombo emphasised the importance of cultural exchange and language training between UNIVEN and Chinese colleagues. He also highlighted the importance of connection between language and culture.

The Co-Director of GTCI, Prof Grace GE (middle photo) when outlining the purpose of the event, said that while the UN originally aimed to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity, the UNIVEN event hoped to increase a better understanding of the Chinese language and the UNIVEN culture. The event featured displays of Chinese handicrafts, books, food, sports and games, calligraphy and paintings, and a Chinese store where participants had the opportunity to enjoy and learn from a variety of cultural activities.

A third year UNIVEN Nutrition student and SUSI alumna, Ms Ndalamo Hope Siaga (on the right photo above) spoke about the value of wellness and health, stressing that a person's diet reflects their overall health. In light of the



possibility of employment in China, she urged students to learn about the Chinese food culture, how the Chinese prepare nutritious meals, what methods they use and what kind of food they eat to promote their good well-being through healthy eating. She cautioned her peers to take note of what is happening on the day. She advised other students to look out for available scholarships.

Mulalo Bianca Malada spoke on behalf of students who are learning the Chinese Language at GTCI. The Chinese language classes at GTCI officially kick-started with 320 registered participants on 18 March 2024.

Bianca indicated that she is enjoying learning the Chinese language and she even greeted the audience and expressed her wishes in Chinese language fluently.

Another GTCI Chinese language student representative, Relective Rikhotso performed the traditional Chinese Nunchakus and spurred waves of applause from the audience.



Mr Thabo Dikgale, Partnership Officer in the International Relations and Partnerships Directorate (on the left photo) emphasised the importance of exploring and understanding other cultures to gain self-awareness and refrain from prioritising other' cultures. People enjoying tasting Chinese food (on the right photo above).



2nd Phase of the Disabled Student Unit (DSU) building is officially open



The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni officially opened the recently completed fully equipped DSU building and Outdoor Gym on Friday, 12 April 2024. The objective of the DSU is to facilitate access to higher education for students living with disabilities.



Prof Nthambeleni said the building should be well maintained for the benefit of students living with disabilities. He said as management they are happy to see that the DSU is completed and functional with 19 offices, two board-rooms, assistive devices, two Computer labs, Exam room, Lecture Hall, two Kitchens for staff and students, all in all, the building is fitted with the suitable furniture, and the list can go on and on. The assistive devices and technology in these computer labs communicate the University's commitment to inclusivity.

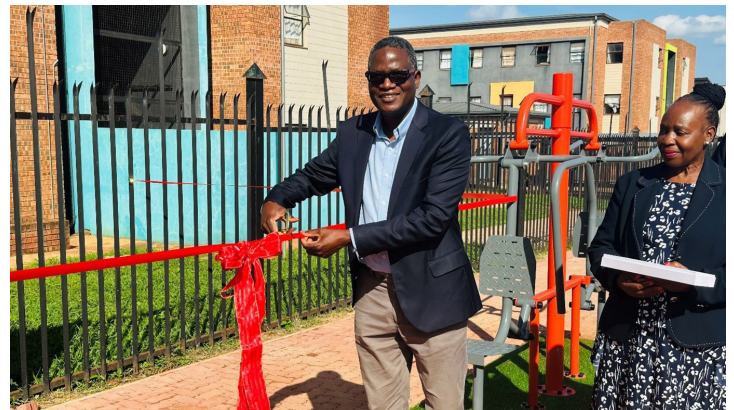
Director CHETL, Prof Lindiwe Mulaudzi and the Head DSU, Dr Tshifhiwa Mbuva expressed joy as they receive the building. Students also witnessed an important milestone of the opening ceremony of the 2nd phase of the Disabled Students Unit building.



On photo: Prof Bernard Nthambeleni poses for a photo with some staff and students.

The Project was funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

The University offers a conducive environment to support and enhance learn-



On photo: Prof Bernard Nthambeleni cutting the ribbon at the out-door gym with Mrs Grace Cibi watching



L-R: Messrs Azwidhwi Mukheli, John Mdaka and Aluwani Magadani



Above photo: Outdoor gym space



On Photo: Charmaine Musetsho with other participants on the right photo

Bachelor of Indigenous Knowledge Systems student's journey at the 2024 Unilever South Africa Idea Trophy

Charmaine Musetsho, a fourth-year student in the Department of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Heritage Studies pursuing a Bachelor of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, shares her experience of participating in the prestigious Unilever South Africa Idea Trophy competition hosted on March 17th – 19th, 2024, in Sandton, Johannesburg. The Unilever South Africa Idea Trophy serves as a beacon for students nationwide, offering a transformative journey beyond the confines of traditional academia.

Charmaine worked with teammates Veronica Mwale and Michael Mabuza, as she embarked on a two-day journey of insightful activities and invaluable networking opportunities. One of her highlights was the LevelUp U-th talk, featuring distinguished directors and managers from Unilever. Charmaine recounts absorbing wisdom on career discernment, emphasising the significance of selfawareness, curiosity, and adaptability. The discourse illuminated the importance of networking, underscoring the saying: "Your network equals your net worth."

Venturing beyond the confines of the office, the journey continued with a visit to the Boksburg Unilever factory—a firsthand encounter with the intricate workings of a multinational corporation. The factory tour offered invaluable insights into operational dynamics and sustainability practices, enriching the participants' understanding of real-world business operations.

For Charmaine, 19 March, 2024, marked the culmination of the transformative experience, with teams gearing up for presentations before esteemed judges. Charmaine's team embraced the challenge, leveraging their expertise to propose innovative solutions to real business dilemmas. The feedback received was invaluable, providing constructive insights to refine their approach further.

During the grand finale presentations, each team showcased their innovative skills. The culmination of months of preparation and dedication was met with anticipation as the winner of the Unilever South Africa Idea Trophy was announced. While Charmaine's team did not clinch the top spot, the experience was a triumph—a testament to their resilience, creativity,



On photo: Chamaine with other participants and collaborative spirit.

reflecting on her journey, Charmaine emphasised the profound lessons learnt from the competition. She underscores the importance of continuous learning, urging fellow students to seize opportunities for personal and professional development.

From embracing curiosity to harnessing the power of networking, Charmaine imparts invaluable wisdom to her peers, echoing the sentiment: "Skills are the new currency. As Charmaine returns to the University of Venda, she carries a wealth of experiences and insights from the Unilever South Africa Idea Trophy. Her journey serves as an inspiration—an embodiment of the transformative power of experiential learning and the limitless potential of the entrepreneurial mindset. The Unilever South Africa Idea Trophy is a testament to the commitment to nurturing the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders—a beacon of opportunity illuminating the path towards a brighter, more innovative future.

Tip Offs

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus - contact the University Hotline

**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.

Ground-breaking DNA study suggests that South African leopards may be unique.



Few animals in the world are as charismatic as the leopard (*Panthera pardus*). Perhaps it is because the leopard belongs to a select group of only five species known as the big cats. On the other hand, it may be because the leopard is the second-most widely distributed large mammal on earth, with the first being humans. Or perhaps it is because leopards and humans both evolved in Africa and since we are among the continent's top predators, our paths have been intertwined with each other for more than a million years.

A young male leopard stops for a late-night drink at Bitterpan waterhole, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, South Africa. Today, an important study on African leopard genetics has been published in the journal *Peer* by a team of international scientists led by Professor Yoshan Moodley of the Department

of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture at the University of Venda and Dr Declan Morris of the University of Adelaide, Australia. The team investigated mitochondrial DNA, which is only passed on by females, and found that all African leopards belong to one of two maternal DNA lines, which diverged from each other during the middle Pleistocene Epoch, between 450 – 960 thousand years ago. Importantly, one of these maternal lines is found mainly in Southern Africa and is the only line present in leopards of the Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and the Mpumalanga Highveld. From this curious distribution of maternal DNA, the team was able to figure out that leopards must have been isolated in South Africa during the harsh and dry conditions of the late Pleistocene. However, in the last 10-15 thousand years the climate has become milder, and so both leopard maternal lines have come back into contact with each other in the Lowveld region around the Kruger National Park.

Although the study suggests that leopards inhabiting most of South Africa could have evolved differently to those in the rest of Africa, these results must still be confirmed with nuclear DNA data, which is inherited by both sexes. The team is presently working on such a follow-up study, and if their results are similar, it could mean the discovery of a new leopard population that is unique to South Africa.

You can read more about this ground-breaking study by following the link below to the article on the *PeerJ* website: <https://peerj.com/articles/17018/>. Alternatively, you can download the article directly through this link: <https://peerj.com/articles/17018.pdf>.

The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law at UNIVEN leads by example

The National Research Foundation has awarded Professor Modimowabarwa Kanyane, Executive Dean in the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law a C-2 rating as a research scientist. This rating is given to individuals for whom "All of the reviewers are firmly convinced that the applicant is an established researcher."

The NRF rating confirmed the research work of Professor Kanyane who has made strides in the discipline of Public Administration as a social science research scientist. Professor Kanyane demonstrated his expertise as a governance expert. He participated in over 100 local and international conferences, produced 136 published research works which include 56 peer-reviewed research outputs in recognised publishing outlets and supervised 72 master's and doctoral work to the successful completion.

Among other awards he scooped, Professor Kanyane is the recipient of the 2022 Star of Discovery Global Award, WHITRAP under the auspices of UNESCO as the winner of the case study together with Professor Mzo Sirayi "Smart Village Through Indigenous Knowledge and Fourth Industrial Revolution in South Africa. His latest book publications span the editing of *The BRICS in Africa Promoting Development?* HSRC Press with the team and *Corruption, Ethics and Governance: Issues, Cases and Interventions*, Routledge www.routledge.com/9781032755656 in 2023/4 and currently working on *Thirty Years of Democracy in South Africa: Ethical, Capable and Developmental State*. It is a collection of research work from scholars largely in public administration, governance and development.

Professor Kanyane received accolades from his Faculty mostly said he 'led by example' in receiving this rating. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, Professor Feza congratulated him by saying "Your wings are unglued, fly as high as you can". The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, Professor Eucebious Lekalakala-Mokgele and the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Bernard Nthambeleni also congratulated him on this exciting news! The University community welcomes the rating and wishes Professor Kanyane well in his work on governance to continue resolving societal challenges locally and globally.



A PhD candidate from the Department of Chemistry visits a research Lab at Robert Gordon University in Scotland



On left photo: Fulufhelo Tshikhudo, Department of chemistry PhD candidate with some students at Robert Gordon University, Scotland

Ms Fulufhelo Tshikhudo, a final year PhD candidate in the Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture - University of Venda, spent ten weeks (30 August – 17 November 2023) at Robert Gordon University (RGU) in Scotland, UK to undertake experiments that are part of her project. She was hosted by Dr Carlos Fernandez whose research interests include among others developing new materials to investigate the effect of corrosion. Dr Fernandez is part of Ms Tshikhudo's supervisory team led by Prof Lutendo Murulana (CorroSci Research group leader), Prof Simon Mnyakeni Moleele (Organic chemistry), and Prof Mwombeki Kabanda (Computational chemistry).

Ms Tshikhudo is one of the six recipients of the 2021 NRF-SASAC Doctoral Scholarship which sponsored her trip to Scotland. NRF-SASAC offers dedicated three-year bursaries to PhD candidates based at South African universities in collaboration with a researcher from UK-based institutions. Part of the benefits of the bursary is to travel to UK to meet with the supervisor as well as conducting experiments in their labs.

Ms Tshikhudo is working on synthetic 1,3,5-triazine derivatives as corrosion inhibitors on mild steel and aluminum in corrosive environments. Some of the work that was done at Robert Gordon University included modifying triazine derivatives with nanoparticles: This work was done in two stages: firstly, with

nanoparticles coated on the metal to investigate the interaction between the coated metal and the triazine derivative solutions through electrochemical characterization and lastly, the nanoparticle added to the solutions of triazine derivatives. This was done to investigate the interaction between the modifying inhibitors solution and the metal through electrochemical characterization. The mentioned procedures were done using the Corrtest electrochemical workstation. Furthermore, the surface morphology and the interaction of triazine derivatives and mild steel metal were studied using a scanning electron microscope (SEM) and energy-dispersive X-ray analysis (EDXA).

It is every student's dream to have an opportunity to travel abroad, let alone to work in an international lab. Hence, Ms Tshikhudo in her own words said that the experience has been nothing short of transformative, it was one of the most valuable experiences in my university life.' As she is wrapping up her PhD project, she reflected on how privileged she was for the networks she has built during the time spent in Scotland and is excited to see how these will help her grow as an independent researcher post her doctoral studies. The Executive Dean Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Prof Natasha Potgieter is supporting these initiatives to provide our students with opportunities to learn from research collaborations and work in a global environment. The exposure to other laboratories helps our students to widen their horizon and make their research globally relevant.

UNIVEN Choir hoist University flag high during Mapungubwe Choral Festival



UNIVEN Choir on the stage during Mapungubwe Choral Festival

Music lovers recently gathered at the prestigious Mapungubwe Choral Festival where the University of Venda (UNIVEN) Choir delivered an unforgettable performance. This event was held under the Limpopo Province, Department of Sport Arts and Culture. UNIVEN Choir, led by Dr Meisie Madzivhandila as the Choir Director supported by Mr Dimakatso Sebata showcased their talent and dedication. The festival is renowned for promoting choral music and highlighting both established and emerging choirs. The UNIVEN Choir's participation was a testament to their commitment to excellence and innovation in music. Their performance was praised for its freshness and energy, earning them accolades from adjudicators. Its outstanding contribution was acknowledged with a certificate of appreciation.

UNIVEN Choir aims to continue growing and making impact in the music field. With ongoing support, Dr Madzivhandila said the choir is confident that it can achieve what it wants to achieve. "As we celebrate UNIVEN Choir's success, we recognise the importance of nurturing artistic talent and fostering the love for music in our communities. Let us applaud their achievements and look forward to the beautiful melodies that this choir will bring for us," said Dr Madzivhandila.

More than ninety UNIVEN researchers attend Research Grant Proposal Writing Workshop



Photo: Participants of the Research Grant Proposal Writing Workshop

The University of Venda's Directorate of Research and Innovation, in partnership with the faculties recently organised capacity building workshop on grant proposal writing for academics and active researchers (mainly emerging researchers) including the Postdoctoral Research Fellows. The Research Grant Proposal Writing workshop took place on Friday, 19 April 2024 at 2Ten Hotel.

The targeted group were academics and active researchers who wish to improve their skills in research grant proposal writing with the aim to submit research grant applications to various sponsors in the academic year 2024. Participants learned about the skills in proposal writing, grant management, ethics, grant application review process, grant award, execution, and reporting.

Director Research and Innovation, Prof Jabulani Makhubele told participants that the Research and Innovation Directorate is a support department which is always available to assist researchers. He urged researchers to contact the office whenever they need assistance.



Director Research and Innovation, Prof Jabulani Makhubele (Left) and Prof Takalani Mashau, the Deputy Dean for Research and Postgraduate in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (Right)

Prof Takalani Mashau, the Deputy Dean for Research and Postgraduate in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education said this is an important workshop of the university because we learn how to write winning project proposals. "Research is also important because of its nature and ability to generate income for the University."



Dr Sinah Sekhula (on the left photo) spoke about the administrative support for the faculties in Grant Proposal Writing. This is an activity that drives the

institution towards achieving its strategic objective on linkages, partnership, and institutional visibility. She further covered topics around human capacity development excellence pipeline; Grant life cycle; operational procedures in pre- and post-award issues; contract negotiation for NRF grants and other grants and contracts; award execution, reporting and external funding for staff research projects.

The Workshop was facilitated by Prof Pascal Bessong (a Research Professor of Microbiology, Chair of HIV/AIDS and Global Health; and the Director of UNIVEN-SAMRC Extramural Unit in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture) and Prof Lufuno Makhado (Deputy Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies; Associate Professor/Professor in the Department of Public



Health with specialization in Epidemiology and Biostatistics, HIV and AIDS research, Epilepsy, TB/HIV/NCDs integrated services, sexual and reproductive health, and trauma-related research, Faculty of Health Sciences).

University of Venda celebrates World Intellectual Property Day



On Thursday, 18 April 2024, the Office of Technology Transfer in the Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation (CE-IIIC), in collaboration with the School of Law in the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law, hosted a hybrid World Intellectual Property (IP) Day Seminar. The seminar was held at the Research Conference Centre and online.

The purpose of the seminar was to raise awareness about IP, where researchers and students could learn more about how IP laws impact our daily lives. This year's World IP Day theme is – IP and the SDGs: Building our common future with innovation and creativity.

The Interim Director of the School of Law in the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law at the University of Venda, Professor Lonias Ndlovu (**on the photo above**), when welcoming the guests, researchers, and students, highlighted the importance of IP and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in accordance with this year's theme. He also mentioned the University's Strategic Objectives in alignment with the SDGs. In addition, he informed the gathering that he and other authors would launch the first-ever book on IP and the SDGs to celebrate this year's World IP Day. The book titled *The Elgar Companion to Intellectual Property and the Sustainable Development Goals (2024)*, published by Edward Elgar Publishing, a premier academic publisher in the United Kingdom, features his co-authored chapter alongside others written by authors from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, the United States and Canada.



The Acting Senior Manager of Patents and Designs at the Companies and Intellectual Properties Commission (CIPC), Mr Mehluli Ncube (**on the photo above**), began his presentation by setting out the mandate of CIPC, which includes the registration of companies, co-operatives, and IP rights. The CIPC plays a crucial role in enforcing relevant legislation, promoting compliance with financial reporting standards, and providing research and advice on national policy. Compliance with CIPC requirements is essential for businesses, and CIPC offers resources and assistance to support them.

He indicated that the CIPC oversees registrations related to IP rights like trademarks, patents, designs, and copyrights, ensuring legal protection

over creative works or inventions. He said innovation increases efficiency. He further set out the different forms or types of IP – patents, trademarks, copyright, designs, plant breeders' rights and trade secrets. In his conclusion, he mentioned that complying with the requirements set by the CIPC is crucial for businesses operating in South Africa.



The Founder and CEO of Global Health Biotech (PTY) LTD, Professor Kealebogile Motaung (**on the photo above**), began her presentation by thanking the University of Venda for inviting her to participate in the World IP Day 2024 Seminar. She pointed out that the importance of conducting postgraduate research is to take the research outputs to the market – to create an innovative society. IP generated at the University should benefit society by solving societal problems.

She pointed out that many people have innovative ideas but do not think about commercialisation – i.e., entrepreneurship. Universities have excellent skills in training students and publishing research papers, but they lack skills in commercialisation and entrepreneurship. Therefore, there is a lack of entrepreneurial culture at universities, particularly among students.

She pointed out that there is a lack of entrepreneurial culture in our universities, but the EDHE is trying to help install the entrepreneurial culture in the universities, especially among the students. She also presented a case study on Global Health Biotech (PTY) LTD, a company she started from her research outputs with her postgraduate students.

In her conclusion, she said we must set up entrepreneurship support programmes to provide training, mentorship, funding, and access to relevant networks.

The Executive Chairman of Nunnovation Africa Foundation (NAF), Mr Khathu Mashau (**on the photo in the next column**), encouraged students to start thinking out of the box, i.e., when they have ideas, they must act on them immediately. This will help them know early whether the idea will work or not. He also told them about his journey in entrepreneurship, which started when he was a primary school learner – cutting grass on weekends to make money. He explained what



NAF does, which includes providing industry-specific and inclusive innovation solutions through local, regional, and international collaborations. NAF has trained youths in Gauteng, some of whom have been deployed to various companies.

The Deputy Director and IP Attorney at the National Intellectual Property Management Office (NIPMO), Ms Tshimangadzo Munyai (**on the left photo below**), highlighted the importance of the World IP Day which is to raise awareness about the role of IP rights in fostering innovation and creativity. Celebrating World IP Day demonstrates the economic, technological, and cultural importance of IP and IP rights. This year's theme for World IP Day – IP and SDGs: Building our Common Future with Innovation and Creativity, is very important as it addresses critical areas of concern. SDG 9 is crucial as it relates to industry innovation and infrastructure. In this regard, without technology and innovation, industrialisation will not happen, and without industrialisation, development will not happen. SDGs aim to end poverty and all forms of hunger, ensure healthy lives and promoting well-being for all. It also recognises the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education and aims to address inequalities specifically relating to gender and among countries.

She also set out NIPMO's mandate, which includes supporting HEIs and Research Councils in identifying and protecting IP emanating from publicly financed research and development. She further mentioned some of the offerings from NIPMO, which can be found on the website.



Adcock Ingram's Public Affairs Executive, Nkosinathi Mthethwa (**on the right photo**) set out Adcock Ingram's commitment to good governance, values, and ethics. This includes the principles of transparency, integrity, and accountability in all their dealings with various stakeholders. He informed the audience about what Adcock Ingram does and how they use IP to protect their products and services. They use patents to protect the products and their methods of manufacture. They use trademarks to distinguish their products from the competitors' products and to ensure the quality of their products and services is not compromised. Registered designs protect the aesthetic appearance of their products and packaging. He mentioned that collaboration with UNIVEN can be discussed in another platform to see what shape such collaboration would take.

UNIVEN conducts skills audit and engage with farmers to identify areas of support

The UNIVEN Farm Manager, Ms Thifheli Kutama and staff members from the University's Experimental Farm, together with the Department of Agriculture, recently visited Madimbo, and Malale as part of the preparatory programme for the 2024 Farmers' Day.



Ms Thifheli Kutama (on the far right) and her team, Mr Mashige from the Department of Agriculture, and Poultry farmers in Madimbo village

The primary objective of the visit was to conduct a skills audit and engage with farmers to identify areas where the university could offer support.

The Farmers' Day is an event aimed at bridging the gap between farmers and improving their productivity. On this day, farmers are provided with valuable information about the essentials for successful farming, such as seed supply, farm machinery, chemical fertilizers, irrigation, animal health, and others. Companies and organisations that offer these services, as well as researchers, will be present to assist farmers and to answer questions that they may have.

Ms Thifheli Kutama highlighted that the next step in this collaborative effort will be to engage with crop production farmers in May 2024, followed by workshops before the Farmers' Day in August. She said this ongoing engagement has the potential to significantly improve the productivity and profitability of the poultry farming community, while also helping retain key skills within the community.



Mr Khangwelo Selapyane from the experimental farm and the team with Mrs Munyai, a poultry farmer from Malale village



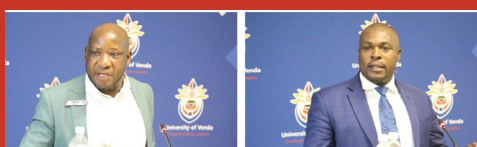
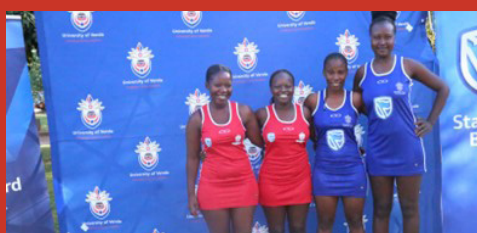
Ms Thifheli Kutama (on the far left) explaining the importance of biosecurity to the female Poultry farmers in Madimbo village

Standard Bank Thavhani Mall Branch Sponsors UNIVEN Football and Netball Clubs



Above Photo: UNIVEN FC players in a new kit

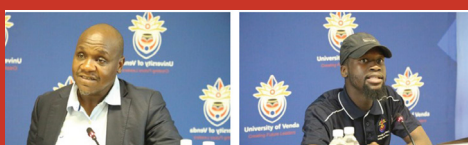
The Standard Bank Thavhani Mall Branch led by Mr Andries Ndlovu as the Head of Personal Banking has recognised the outstanding achievements in competitive sports in which male UNIVEN Football Club and female Netball Club respectively competes. The Standard Bank sponsored the two clubs with two full sets of sport kits for both football and netball respectively which cover both home and away games. The handing over of these kits took place on the 29 April 2024 at the Student Parliament in the Student Center Building.



When handing over the kits, Mr Andries Ndlovu (on the left photo) shared with the audience a brief partnership background with UNIVEN which dates back to 2021 wherein the Standard Bank has been championing various programmes, events and campaigns that benefited the broader student population. Mr. Ndlovu said "as standard bank we pride ourselves with these kinds of initiatives that are geared towards supporting UNIVEN community because of the belief that these are our future leaders. We are extremely proud to see that most of our Senior Managers and staff at Standard Bank are UNIVEN graduates."

In his response on behalf of the University Management, the Director Legal Services, Adv Eric Nemukula (on the right photo above) expressed a sense of gratitude and appreciated the impact that Standard Bank has brought since its partnership with UNIVEN. Adv Nemukula said, "while UNIVEN is in the process of improving the quality of its sports infrastructure, this handing over comes at the right time where it will assist our sports clubs to continuously perform at their best and achieve more accolades. Standard Bank is indeed part of

the University community through this corporate partnership."



The Director Student Affairs, Mr Azwidowi Mukheli (on the left photo above) appreciated the donation of these kits when welcoming attendees of this handing over ceremony. SRC President, Mr John Ndaka (on the right photo above) appreciated all the contributions that Standard Bank has been doing in uplifting the lives of UNIVEN students. He further urged the Standard Bank to roll over these initiatives to other sporting codes within the University.



Mr Patrick Thaba, Sport Officer and Coordinator of the Sport and Recreation Unit proposed a vote of thanks (on the left photo above) and urged all attendees to rally behind the success story of UNIVEN Football Club. He further mentioned that UNIVEN Football Club is currently occupying position number 1 on the SAFA Vhembe Hollywood Bets League under Stream D-2 and the team is on course to win the league as the defending champions and is likely to proceed to play the Champ of Champs play offs for the second time in succession. The programme was facilitated by the Sports Administrator in the Sport and Recreation Unit under Student Affairs, Dr Ndiafhi Percy Mugwedi (on the right photo above).



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