



Zhejiang Gongshang University Visits UNIVEN to Explore Possible Collaborative Areas



On Friday, 28 March 2025, Zhejiang Gongshang University (ZJGU) delegates visited the University of Venda (UNIVEN) to explore possible collaborative areas. During this visit, Prof ZHAO Haoxing who is the Executive Dean of the Institute of SinoAfrica Economic and Trade Research at the ZJGU was honoured with an Adjunct Professorship in the Entrepreneurship SARCHI Chair in the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law during the ceremony that took place at 2 Ten Hotel, Sibasa.

In his opening and welcome remarks, UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni mentioned that "we are here to reinforce the idea of making sure that our students benefit on whatever is happening at the two partnering universities. It is our joy to finally see Prof ZHAO visiting UNIVEN." Prof Nthambeleni highlighted a brief history and profile of UNIVEN where he mentioned that UNIVEN is a young innovative university that produces graduates who are busy making impact out there. "Our research also benefits our communities out there." In his Closing Remarks, Prof Nthambeleni mentioned that he believes that all possible areas of collaborations should not just be a talk shop, they must be put to practice and benefit South Africans and the people of China.



Director: Green Technology Confucius Institute - UNIVEN, Prof Eric Maluta shared the feedback from the Burgersfort Engagement. He mentioned that there is a special economic zone that is being developed at Burgersfort and there is a collaboration between Burgersfort Economic Zone and UNIVEN. This partnership is on the development of Green Technology development. He mentioned that a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Burgersfort Special Economic Zone and UNIVEN.



The Executive Dean of the Institute of Sino-Africa Economic Trade Research and the Zhejiang Gongshang University, Prof ZHAO Haoxing gave the overview of the Institute of Sino-Africa Economic and Trade Research, Zhejiang Gongshang University and possible collaboration between the two universities. He mentioned that the ZJGU and UNIVEN have a lot of areas of possible collaboration and both universities should make use of these opportunities. He said young people should be given the platforms to be innovative and be entrepreneurs. In his closing remarks, Prof ZHAO mentioned that there are many areas of possible collaborations between UNIVEN, Limpopo provincial government and Zhejiang Gongshang University.



Prof ZHAO Haoxing



The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law, Prof Modimowabarwa Kanyane gave the overview of the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law. He said the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law is celebrating three years of growth and excellence and has in the past three years signed many Memorandums of Understanding. "These partnerships are already benefitting UNIVEN stakeholders partnering organisations, including communities out there."

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The following people delivered possible collaborative areas: Dr Mlungiseleli Ganto representing the Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation; Prof Grace GE, Director of Green Technology Confucius Institute; Prof Lutendo Murulana, Deputy Dean of Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Mr Mulalo Nemakonde, Thulamela Local Municipality LED Manager; Mr Mukundi Mushapi, Vhembe District Municipality LED Manager.



Director International Relations and Partnerships, Dr Segun Obadire gave the summary of collaborative areas and next steps. He said he hopes these proposed collaborations will be put to practice and be effective in assisting all parties involved including their surrounding communities.

"We need to strengthen these collaborations and ensure that they benefit our people," he said.

We need to strengthen these collaborations and ensure that they benefit our people



In his vote of thanks, the Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Joseph Francis thanked participants and expressed strong confidence in the collaborating universities.



Dr Rebecca Bessong recognised for her research on Teacher Leadership



Dr Bessong was selected by ATLAS to speak at this international forum because of the research paper that she published, titled "Creating Space for Teachers as Curriculum Leaders in Secondary Schools."

In this paper, she explored the way school principals in the Vhembe District, South Africa, create opportunities for teachers to perform roles as curriculum leaders. The presentation by Dr Bessong was in line with the institutional strategic objective of strengthening the university's institutional profile and visibility through local, regional, and international effective stakeholder engagements, and reciprocal scholarly partnerships. Dr Bessong's research interests include technology in school leadership, teacher leadership, teacher agency in pedagogy and curriculum content, and curriculum review in higher education. Her research thrusts contribute to Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 8, which aim to achieve quality education, decent work and economic growth respectively.

Dr Rebecca Bessong, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the University of Venda (UNIVEN)'s Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education's School of Education recently delivered a paper at an international webinar organised by the Association of Teacher Leadership and Scholarship (ATLAS).

Her work is supported by the National Research Foundation, South Africa. She has presented papers at scholarly conferences in South Africa, Eswatini, and the United States of America.

Empowering teachers as curriculum leaders is key to transforming education from within – Dr Rebecca Bessong's research shows how school leadership can unlock this potential

University of Venda SRC Teams Up with Chamber of Commerce for Job Creation Indaba



(SRC) President Vusi Mokoena and Minister of Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Mr Ndimande Mandlakayise

On Saturday, 29 March 2025, the University of Venda's (UNIVEN) Student Representative Council (SRC) Minister of Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Mr Mandlakayise Ndimande, in collaboration with the student chapter of the National Union of Municipal Chambers of Commerce and Industry (NUMCCI Studentpreneur), led by Mr Vusi Mokoena, hosted a groundbreaking Job Creation Indaba at E1 Lecture Hall, UNIVEN. The event was designed to educate students on their constitutional, legal, and economic rights, while emphasising the importance of personal responsibility in leveraging these rights. Through engagement and awareness, the initiative aimed to enhance students' empowerment and employability in an evolving socio-economic environment. The Indaba featured dynamic discussions with key industry professionals and experts from the University's Vice-Chancellor's Office, NUMCCI, UNIVEN's Department of Business Management, UNIVEN Law Clinic, Standard Bank, Old Mutual, and Kalahari Resort. These interactive sessions explored essential themes such as entrepreneurship, economic development, and the role of legal frameworks in fostering ethical and sustainable business practices. By bridging the gap between academia and industry, the event provided valuable networking opportunities, equipping students with the tools necessary to navigate South Africa's complex economic landscape.

In his opening remarks, Mr Ndimande Mandlakayise underscored the significance of legal and constitutional literacy in promoting ethical business conduct. He stressed that legal frameworks should be viewed not as barriers but as instruments for responsible economic growth. "As students and future leaders, we must recognise that

these frameworks are enablers of sustainable development," he stated, reaffirming the event's mission to equip students with essential knowledge to make a meaningful societal impact.



Dr Takalani Dzaga, Director of Marketing, Branding, and Communication

Dr Takalani Dzaga, Director of Marketing, Branding, and Communication at UNIVEN, welcomed attendees on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni. He highlighted how the event aligns with the university's five-year strategic vision of positioning itself as an entrepreneurial institution. Dr Dzaga urged students to be mindful of their digital presence, warning that employers increasingly scrutinise candidates' social media profiles. He emphasised the need for students to curate a professional online identity that aligns with their career aspirations. He urged participants to take cognisance of ethical principles and always adhere to the highest standards of integrity.



Mr Albert Jeleni, President and CEO of NUMCCI and Provincial Consular of the Limpopo Chamber of Commerce and Industry

A key highlight of the Indaba was an insightful address by Mr Albert Jeleni, President and CEO of NUMCCI and Provincial Consular of the Limpopo Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He provided a critical analysis of South Africa's pressing unemployment crisis, citing the staggering youth unemployment rate of 70%. Mr Jeleni outlined major barriers to employment, including a lack of practical experience, skill mismatches, limited innovation, corruption, socioeconomic challenges, and constraints in the informal economy. He urged students to shift their mindset from political engagement to proactive entrepreneurship and strategic business planning.

He further called on students and student leadership structures to advocate for institutional reforms that enhance employment relevance and global competitiveness. Among his proposals were constitutional reforms within student governance to expand leadership opportunities beyond political affiliations, as well as the establishment of industry-aligned initiatives such as Advisory Boards, Student Ambassador Programmes, and Industry Exposure Initiatives. Drawing inspiration from historic student movements such as "#FeesMustFall", he encouraged students to use their collective power to drive economic transformation, stating, "Just as past generations fought for access and liberation, you must champion systems that foster education, innovation, and accountability."

The Indaba featured thought-provoking contributions from industry leaders. Prof Norman Chiliya from UNIVEN's Department

of Business Management stressed the importance of cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset to combat unemployment. He highlighted the university's Incubation Hub as a crucial platform for student innovation and economic participation.

Attorney Edward Lubisi from the UNIVEN Law Clinic delivered a compelling presentation on human rights within business operations and the necessity of legal representation in achieving justice. He reinforced the importance of ethical business conduct and reminded students of the long-term impact their social media presence could have on their professional futures.

Reflecting on the event, second-year Criminal Justice student Mr Netshivhilidulu Mutshidzi remarked, "This was an eye-opening experience. Learning about entrepreneurship, legal frameworks, and even social media's role in employment made me reconsider how I present myself professionally. It was inspiring to see how we, as students, can contribute to economic growth through informed career and business decisions."

Delivering the vote of thanks, Mandlakayise Ndimande expressed gratitude to all guest speakers, industry professionals, UNIVEN leadership, and students for their contributions. He also acknowledged NUMCCI Studentpreneur and the SRC team for making the event a success. Ndimande further thanked students for their overwhelming support, stating, "Your presence here in such great numbers proves that we are ready to take responsibility for our future. Together, we can drive real economic transformation," he concluded.

The Job Creation Indaba successfully facilitated meaningful engagement between students and industry experts, offering invaluable insights into entrepreneurship, economic development, and professional conduct. Through in-depth discussions and expert guidance, attendees gained a clearer understanding of the evolving business landscape and the role of legal and ethical standards in driving sustainable progress. This partnership between the University of Venda's SRC and the Chamber of Commerce & Industry marks a significant step toward preparing students for the demands of the professional world.



Youth empowerment begins with knowledge – when students understand their rights, responsibilities, and economic potential, they become drivers of real change

Exciting News from the University of Venda - Smart Lecture Halls Handover

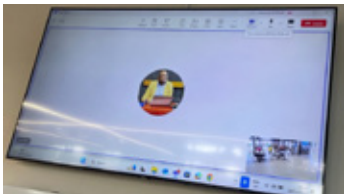


We are thrilled to announce that the University of Venda is moving towards the future with the introduction of smart lecture halls. The ICT Department has successfully completed the smart lecture rooms in the new Health Sciences building, equipped with state-of-the-art technology to enhance the learning experience for students and the faculty. The handover of the new equipment was conducted on 28 March 2025.

The new lecture halls feature:

- Large interactive screens that connect to the internet allow seamless online resource integration.
- Microsoft Teams connectivity, enabling virtual collaboration and remote learning opportunities.
- Modern whiteboards and other interactive tools to facilitate dynamic and engaging teaching methods.

This advancement is part of our ongoing commitment to providing a cutting-edge educational environment that prepares our students for the challenges of the modern world. We look forward to seeing these smart lecture halls' positive impact on our academic community.



The ICT Director, Mr Sam Khoza, joined the online handover session and stated, "As we hand over these facilities, we are confident that they will greatly benefit the Faculty of Health Sciences, providing a dynamic and modern space for education and research."



The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Prof Tshilidzi Mulaudzi, expressed excitement, indicating, "We will take care of these devices as they will support our academic programme."



After the handover session, Mr Anza Negota facilitated the demonstration and training of the system, ensuring that faculty staff are well-equipped to make the most of these innovative tools. His expertise and guidance were invaluable in showcasing the full potential of the smart lecture halls, highlighting how they can transform traditional teaching methods and foster a more interactive and immersive educational experience.

With smart lecture halls, we're not just upgrading infrastructure – we're transforming the way we teach, learn, and prepare for the future

DCEEIIC at UNIVEN hosts the Southern African Entrepreneurship Venture Builder Roadshow



University of Venda staff members, students and EVB representative

The University of Venda (UNIVEN)'s Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation (DCEEIIC) recently hosted the Southern African Entrepreneurship Venture Builder (SA EVB) Roadshow at the UNIVEN Research Conference Centre.

The aim of the roadshow was to provide an overview of entrepreneurship and innovation at UNIVEN and why EVB matters, including the strategic importance, challenges, opportunities, and integration of the EVB into UNIVEN entrepreneurship activities.

The Acting DVC: Research and Postgraduate Studies, Professor Joseph Francis (on the photo below) when welcoming the guest, staff and students highlighted the importance of the SA EVB Roadshow, and how it brings hope. He also mentioned that it promotes the concept that graduates should not just be job seekers but job creators.



Professor Joseph Francis, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Postgraduate Studies



The Entrepreneurship Programme Coordinator, Dr Anyway Mikioni (on the above photo) began his presentation by providing an overview of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the University. He pointed out the necessity of innovation in entrepreneurship for economic development,



L-R: Panel Members, Mr Mmaphuti Ratau, Mr Promise Nyalungu, Ms Tabeca Mokhele, Dr Shonisani Ramashia, Ms Fredda Makoto and Mr Given Maboko

urging participants to transform their home spaces into business opportunities.

He encouraged participants to focus on practical problem-solving and to utilise university resources to develop viable business models. In addition, he stressed that universities must not operate in isolation but collaborate with external communities, industries, and stakeholders. He emphasised mentorship programmes designed to guide student entrepreneurs and prepare them for real-world challenges.



SA EVB Manager, Professor Twum-Darko (on the photo above) introduced the EVB concept. He mentioned that EVB focuses on firsthand entrepreneurial learning through real-world projects and bridges the gap between academic learning and industry needs. He shared examples of successful student-led businesses and stressed the need for universities to function as incubators, facilitating collaboration between students and industry to enhance business development.

He pointed out that universities have a crucial role to play in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset.

He further outlined the required institutional support for EVB - to establish the EVB Centre, to strengthen the industry-academia collaboration for mentorship and internships, to create policies to integrate EVB into the academic programme, to develop funding mechanisms for student start-ups and innovation projects and to provide training.

Ms. Makoto; representing the Office of Technology Transfer (OTT), stated that the OTT sources funds for technology/product development and it is willing to support students and researchers on their entrepreneurial ventures, innovation and intellectual property protection strategies through mentorship and trainings.

She further suggested that the pool of mentors for the EVB programme should be increased, and material tools should be provided to foster and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset.

Mr Nyalungu shared his entrepreneurial journey, including participating in the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education competition. He further mentioned the challenges of scaling a business.

Mr Maboko, a student who was selected to participate in the EVB event in Cape Town, shared his experience from the EVB training, particularly emphasising LaunchPad as a powerful tool for business validation and development.

Panelists emphasised the need for mentorship and funding, stating that without structured support, many student-led ventures struggle to sustain themselves beyond the university environment.

They acknowledged the importance of bridging academia and entrepreneurship, suggesting that universities should work closely with businesses to provide real-world exposure for students.



Dr Mlungiseleli Ganto, the Commercialisation Specialist highlighted several initiatives and steps being taken to support the integration of EVB - which include integrating entrepreneurship education into academic programmes, a recent initiative where staff are trained on entrepreneurship, with the first cohort trained during 2024.



In her closing remarks and vote of thanks, Ms Makole Magoro, the Technology Transfer Coordinator, expressed her gratitude to the participants and emphasised the importance of maintaining a sustained commitment to entrepreneurial development. She highlighted that the day's discussions underscored the need for strong collaboration between students, faculty, and industry to foster a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem within the university.

GTCI Launches International Chinese Language Day 2025 with “Cloud Tour China” Celebrating Language, Culture, and Connection



Attendees of the workshop

The Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTCI) at the University of Venda, on 14 April 2025, opened the 2025 International Chinese Language Day celebrations with a rich cultural showcase under the theme: “Cloud Tour China: Cities – Timeless Gifts Across the Dynasties.” The workshop, held at the UNIVEN Art Gallery, from attendance of students and staff members an immersive three-day journey into the heart of Chinese civilisation, blending history, innovation, and hands-on experiences that reflect the evolving relationship between China and South Africa. The celebration began with a heartfelt opening remark by Mr Ted Xiong, who set the tone with his inspiring message of unity and linguistic empowerment: “It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the celebration of the International Chinese Language Day at the Green Technology Confucius Institute. We gather not only to appreciate the beauty of the Chinese language but also to celebrate the bridges it builds between cultures, especially between the peoples of China and South Africa,” he said.



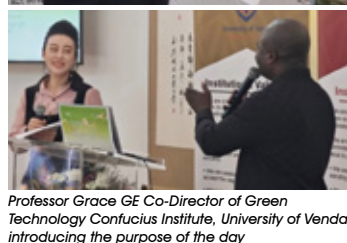
Mr Ted Xiong Senior Lecturer of GTCI giving an opening remark

Mr Xiong highlighted the deeper significance of Chinese Language Day, officially observed on 20 April to align with the Grain Rain, a traditional Chinese solar term symbolising renewal. He spoke passionately about the value of learning Chinese not just for communication, but as a doorway to global opportunity, mutual understanding, and friendship, particularly between two growing BRICS nations.



Prof Eric Maluta, Co-Director of Green Technology Confucius Institute, University of Venda giving a welcoming speech

Prof Eric Maluta welcomed everyone to the Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTCI), where the focus is on green technology and skills development. He encourages students to engage in cultural exchange and emphasised the opportunities available to visit and study in China, ranging from short trips to full academic programmes. He shared personal reflections on how real experiences in China differ from media portrayals and urged students to take advantage of these global opportunities. With humour and sincerity, he likens the students to his children and encourages them to listen, learn, ask questions, and enjoy the upcoming three-day event.



Professor Grace GE Co-Director of Green Technology Confucius Institute, University of Venda introducing the purpose of the day

Prof Grace GE explained that International Chinese Language Day, established by the United Nations 15 years ago, aims to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity, goals which align with the event today. She emphasised the importance of learning not just Chinese language, but also the experience of China as a rapidly developing country and invites attendees to visit the Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTCI) to share their knowledge.

She briefly discussed the six official languages of the UN, which include English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic, and underscores the significance of Chinese as one of these working languages. She mentioned the success of last year's celebration at the Health Sciences Building and highlighted the excitement for this year's event, which will include workshops about Chinese cities, ranging from ancient to modern and innovative.

Prof Grace GE thanked everyone for attending and encouraged them to enjoy the experience, explore the city tours, and participate in the activities.



Professor Tawanda Runhare, Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (FHSSE) giving a keynote speech

The intellectual heartbeat of the day came from the powerful keynote speech by Prof Tawanda Runhare, whose reflections on the role of language in African education challenged attendees to think critically about identity, equity, and decolonisation.

In a moving address, Prof Runhare explored the theme, “The Language Factor in the Realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).” He pointed out that although

Chinese (Mandarin) is the world's second most spoken language, African education remains heavily dependent on colonial European languages. “Language is not just a medium of communication, it is an instrument for critical thinking, self-reflection, imagination, and empathy,” he noted.

Drawing on interactionist theory and African educational philosophy, Prof Runhare called on institutions to adopt mother-tongue instruction and to decolonise academic content, especially in science and technology, to reflect and preserve indigenous knowledge systems. He acknowledged the Confucius Institute's model of cultural exchange but urged a parallel movement to elevate Tshivenda, Xitsonga, and other African languages in formal education.

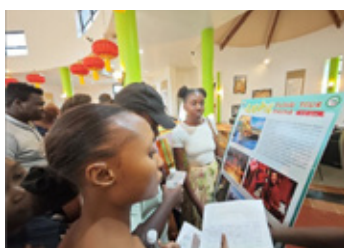
Following his compelling address, attendees were treated to the Cloud Tour Exhibition, which brought eight iconic Chinese cities to life through visual displays and interactive cultural activities. With their Cloud Tour Passports in hand, attendees began their virtual journey, collecting stamps at each city booth and engaging in traditional crafts, calligraphy, and tastings of Chinese tea.



Ms Zoey Zhang introducing the Chinese cities

The theme of the workshop, “Cloud Tour China,” invited participants to explore the history and future of Chinese cities through three exciting workshops. The first day kicked off with the session titled “Cultural DNA of China – Historic Capitals and Heritage Cities,” which immersed attendees in China's millennia-old urban heritage. From ancient capitals to culturally significant cities, the keynote, delivered by Ms Zoey Zhang, offered a fascinating look into China's enduring urban identity.

GTCL Launches International Chinese Language Day 2025 with “Cloud Tour China” Celebrating Language, Culture, and Connection...



Enhancing Research Capacity Through Statistical Ecology and R Programming



L-R: Prof Lourens Swanepoel (SARChI Chair), Ms Amber Cowans [PhD Candidate; Dept Mathematics; St Andrews], Dr Sanet Hugo (Biological Sciences) Prof Chris Sutherland (Dept of Mathematics; St Andrews)

The University of Venda's Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture - DSINRF South African Research Chair in Biodiversity Value and Change (SARChI), in collaboration with the Centre for Research into Ecological and Environmental Modelling (CREEM) at the University of St Andrews, recently hosted a six-day workshop series at the Lajuma Research Centre in the Soutpansberg Mountains. Led by Prof Lourens Swanepoel (SARChI Chair, UNIVEN), Dr Sanet Hugo (Department of Biological Sciences, UNIVEN), Dr Chris Sutherland (University of St Andrews), and Ms Amber Cowans (University of St Andrews), the workshops aimed to strengthen statistical and programming capabilities among postgraduate students and professionals engaged in ecological research.

This initiative builds on a longstanding collaboration between Prof Swanepoel and Dr Sutherland, which began during their postgraduate studies in 2008. Funding support from the SARChI Chair (NRF), the Faculty of Science, Engineering and

Agriculture (FSEA), and a NERC travel grant awarded to Ms Cowans allowed the workshops to be offered at no cost to students.

A two-part training series was conducted to support ecological data analysis skills across experience levels:

Introductory R and Statistical Methods (3 Days), aimed at beginners, this workshop covered R programming basics, data visualisation, and foundational statistical techniques, including linear models, GLMs, and model validation.

Advanced Hierarchical Models in Ecology (3 Days), designed for advanced users, this session focused on analysing imperfect ecological data using hierarchical models, including occupancy, abundance, and spatial capture-recapture techniques.

These workshops provided technical skills and fostered collaboration and knowledge exchange between South African and international researchers, reinforcing the value of interdisciplinary and global partnerships in ecological science.



Strengthening Collaboration: A Benchmarking Workshop on Community Engagement and Student Entrepreneurship

On 08 April 2025, the Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation, and Commercialisation hosted the University of Pretoria's Community Engagement Unit for a benchmarking visit. The primary goals of the workshop were to identify best practices, explore potential collaborative opportunities, and gather valuable insights on advancing community engagement and student entrepreneurship in alignment with our institutional priorities. The programme facilitated an exchange of ideas, allowing both universities to pinpoint areas for mutual growth and collaboration in community engagement initiatives. The workshop was attended by faculty members, directorate representatives, community engagement project leaders, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) coordinators, deputy deans, and department heads.



Prof Joseph Francis

Prof Francis delivered the opening and welcome remarks, praising the University of Pretoria for choosing to collaborate and learn alongside their UNIVEN counterparts. He highlighted UNIVEN's commitment to community engagement, aligning it with the university's strategic priorities, such as being a student-centred institution that produces locally relevant and globally competitive graduates. He also spoke about various projects and programmes that demonstrate UNIVEN's leadership in engaged scholarship and its focus on societal impact.

These include the Skills for the Future Programme (SFFP), the Innovation Champion for Local Economic Development (IC4LED), and the Cleaning Citizen Mindset initiative to inspire responsible action. Prof Francis emphasised that these initiatives have positioned UNIVEN as a university of significant societal impact, furthering its relevance through collaborations within the Vhembe District, including partnerships with traditional councils, municipalities, and sector departments.

Our commitment to community engagement is not an add-on—it is central to who we are as a university of societal impact



Prof Vhonani Netshandama

Prof Vhonani Netshandama provided an overview of DCEIIC, outlining the directorate's mandate and its alignment with the University of Venda's mission, vision, and 2021–2025 strategic thrusts. She emphasised the directorate's commitment to inclusivity and its efforts to demystify engaged scholarship.

Prof Netshandama highlighted how students, staff, researchers, community members, and industry partners collaboratively contribute to making the university a dynamic space for learning, unlearning, and co-generating knowledge that benefits the institution, its students, and the wider community.



Dr Eugene Machimana

Dr Eugene Machimana, Head of Curricular Community Engagement in the Department for Education Innovation at the University of Pretoria, presented an overview of community engagement at UP. He commended UNIVEN for its progress since his initial visit, noting the growing student population and the well-maintained campus. "We are pleased to visit and learn alongside our colleagues at UNIVEN; our decision to come here was intentional," Dr Machimana said. "Our students come from communities—many from rural areas—so this exchange on community engagement is both relevant and essential."

In discussing UP's approach, Dr Machimana emphasised that community engagement is integrated into the university's core teaching, learning, and research functions. He noted that all undergraduate students at the University of Pretoria are required to enrol in curricular community engagement modules, which are prerequisites for graduation.

Community engagement is not optional – it's a core part of our students' academic journey and a bridge to meaningful societal impact



Ms Adivhaho Nengwekhulu

Reflecting on the workshop, Ms. Adivhaho Nengwekhulu—a master's student in African Studies and project leader for the Biodiversity, Conservation and Indigenous Knowledge System (BIKS) initiative—shared her thoughts: "The most exciting part of the day was when the team from UP presented their programmes and work. I noticed that many of the programmes they offer are similar to ours, although their methods and approaches can differ. One particularly fascinating insight was their compulsory Curricular Community Engagement module, which is required not only for students but also for staff. I was especially impressed by their emphasis on creating meaningful impact through community engagement. As a university, I strongly recommend that we consider introducing compulsory community engagement modules. These would provide students with hands-on learning opportunities while also contributing to societal change."

Introducing compulsory community engagement modules would deepen student learning while driving real change in our communities



A group photo of workshop participants

'It is not about money, it is about the Experience' – Mr Sam Khoza, Director ICT Services



Front Row (L to R): Rinae Netshitungulu, Amukelani Mathebula, Uapfa Matsego, Ndifsheni Mboweni (Senior Help Desk Officer), Mulilowawe Ramulondi, Dr Nkhumbuleni Ratshitanga (Head: ICT Support Services)
Middle row (L to R): Tsepiso Khangala, Ramudzuli Khubana, Tlotlang Mathabi, Dakalo Mahada, Murunwa Malakate (ICT Technician)
Back Row (L to R): Kabelo Ramoba (ICT Support Officer), Millicent Nengudza, Julia Maluleke (ICT Technician), Nthabiseng Makola, Aubrey Tshifanyiso, Shibambo Hletelo, Michael Bologo, Thalukanyo Ndou

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Department recently held the Induction Workshop for ICT Student Assistants. This workshop was held to introduce newly appointed student assistants to their roles within the University's ICT Department.

The keynote address was delivered by Mr Sam Khoza, Director of ICT Department, who emphasised that the programme is designed to provide valuable experience rather than financial gain. He highlighted the number of former student assistants and interns that have successfully transitioned into full-time ICT roles, both within the University and the broader industry.



Mr. Sam Khoza - Director: ICT Services

Key Takeaways from the Workshop:

- **Professional Growth and Experience:** Mr. Khoza urged student assistants to maximise this opportunity to develop their technical and professional skills, preparing them for future employment.
- **Guidance from Senior Staff:** Several ICT leaders, including Ms. Murunwa Malakate (ICT Technician), Mr. Rinae Netshitungulu (IT Intern), and Mrs. Julia Maluleke (ICT Service Desk), provided insights into work expectations, technical responsibilities, and the importance of logging and resolving service requests efficiently.
- **Work Ethics and Conduct:** Mr. Kabelo Ramoba (ICT Support Officer) stressed professionalism, proper conduct, and conflict management in the workplace.
- **ICT Specialisations:** Presentations covered key ICT functions such as Business Analysis (Mr. Blessing Nemuramba), and ICT Governance (Dr. Nkhumbuleni Ratshitanga), offering student assistants insights into various career paths.
- **Personal Reflections:** Student assistant Mr. Tlotlang Mathabi praised the induction for helping them understand workplace expectations and professional behaviour, expressing confidence in the programme's career benefits.



Dr. N.T. Ratshitanga – Head: ICT Support Services

In conclusion, Dr. Ratshitanga (Head: ICT Support Services) reinforced the message that the programme is about gaining valuable experience and taking charge of one's career development. The workshop ended with appreciation for the organising team and a commitment to fostering professional growth for all student assistants.

We would like to hear from you!

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