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## Fuelling the Future: UNIVEN Student Finds Purpose in Youth Month

As South Africa commemorates Youth Month, Tlotlang Mathabi, a final-year Bachelor of Science student in Computer Science and Mathematics at the University of Venda (UNIVEN), reflects on the significance of this moment and the powerful role of young people in shaping the country's future.

For Mathabi, Youth Month is more than just a historical reminder—it is a call to purpose. "The courage and determination of the youth who stood against apartheid in 1976 have profoundly impacted my life and educational journey," he says. Their bravery laid the foundation for the opportunities he enjoys today, including access to quality education and support structures that empower students like him to thrive.

Mathabi sees today's youth as active drivers of change—leading economic growth through entrepreneurship, spearheading community development, and promoting social justice. "Youth Month reminds me of my purpose," he shares, emphasising his commitment to becoming a qualified data scientist and using his voice to represent the voiceless.

He credits the University of Venda for playing a pivotal role in his personal and professional development. Through participation in the Student Representative Council,



Mathabi honed his leadership abilities and embraced student activism. The university's initiative to employ final-year students offered him invaluable work experience and insight into the professional world. "The university's motto, Creating Future Leaders, truly resonates with me," he adds.

As part of his Youth Month reflection, Mathabi underscores the importance of perseverance, patience, and faith. Quoting Isaiah 60:22—"When the time is right, I, the Lord, will make it happen"—he encourages fellow students to trust in their individual journeys. He plans to honour the legacy of June 16 by watching Sarafina and reading about the 1976 student uprisings.

His message to his peers is clear: stay focused, pursue your goals with determination, and trust that your moment will come. By embracing resilience and unity, Mathabi believes today's youth can overcome challenges and drive transformative change.

He also highlights the critical role of innovation and entrepreneurship in creating new opportunities and shaping a brighter, more inclusive future.

## Skills for a changing world: UNIVEN public lecture highlights importance of youth empowerment



*Mr Mpho Motsei, National President of the Black Management Forum*

On Wednesday, 18 June 2025, the University of Venda's Department of Youth Development, in collaboration with the Department of Student Affairs, hosted a public lecture in commemoration of June 16, a pivotal date in South African history. The event took place at Agric Two Flat Lecture Halls, Room 03, under the theme: "Skills for the Changing World: Empowering Youth for Meaningful Economic Participation."

This thought-provoking lecture offered a meaningful experience, leaving students, academic staff, and non-academic personnel reflecting deeply on the relevance of Youth Month and their individual roles in shaping a more equitable future.

The keynote speaker, Mr Mpho Motsei, National President of the Black Management Forum, delivered a powerful and engaging address. His speech focused on the pressing economic realities faced by South African youth and the critical need for proactive engagement in building a sustainable future. "When the economy is growing at 1% and the population at 1.5%, there is no balance," Motsei explained. "The issue of unemployment will persist unless the economy grows faster than the population."

He highlighted the urgent need for relevant skills acquisition, particularly in digital literacy and vocational training. "If you do not have digital skills, you'll be replaced by AI," he warned.



Motsei also underscored the roles of mentorship and entrepreneurship in youth empowerment. He cited inspiring examples of young innovators making a positive impact and advocated for the creation of an ecosystem that nurtures creativity and innovation. "Young people are naturally innovative; they just need the right environment to thrive."

He concluded by calling for stronger policy reforms and corporate accountability in addressing youth unemployment. Corporations should be held accountable for their role in youth economic emancipation. The law is already pushing them to invest more in youth development," he asserted, urging South Africa to draw lessons from global success stories in youth development.



*Prof Takalani Mashau, Deputy Dean Research and Postgraduate Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education*

Prof Takalani Mashau officially welcomed attendees, emphasising the historical significance of June 16. He reflected on the bravery of the youth who fought against apartheid, posing critical questions about the current state of the country and the challenges facing today's youth. Prof Mashau encouraged participants to engage meaningfully in the discussion, suggesting that the guest speaker would address many of these pressing concerns.



Rito Mathebula, Administrator in Student Governance, highlighted the importance of seeing youth not only as future leaders but as active agents of change in the present. "It's crucial that we don't see ourselves as the future, but as the present because so much is happening now," he said.

He spoke passionately about youth unemployment and encouraged students to pursue entrepreneurship and innovation. Drawing from personal leadership experiences, Mathebula stressed the value of character and integrity. "Your values and character will speak for you, even in your absence," he advised.



*Dr Mafemani Baloyi, Faculty Manager of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education*

The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr Mafemani Baloyi, Faculty Manager of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education. He praised Mr Motsei for his insightful contribution and emphasised the importance of respecting human dignity and striving for continuous self-improvement. "We only compete with our yesterday so that we improve on our yesterday," he remarked.

Dr Baloyi extended his gratitude to all speakers, students, and organisers, encouraging attendees to apply the lessons learned during the event in their personal and professional lives.



## Growing Flowers on Paper: Green Technology Confucius Institute Hosts Chinese Paper-Cutting Salon



On 11 June 2025, the Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTCI) at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) successfully held a Chinese paper-cutting art salon titled “Blooming Paper.” Through a folk culture lecture, paper-cutting art appreciation, and hands-on creative practice, the event brought the beauty of Chinese culture to students of UNIVEN.

The salon was hosted by Ted Weijie XIONG, the senior lecturer and manager of the GTCI. Starting with the invention of papermaking, Mr. XIONG shared with participating students the history of paper’s creation in China and its subsequent spread to the wider world via the Silk Road. The invention of paper not only transformed the course of human civilisation but also provided a new medium for various forms of Chinese artistic expression. Many Chinese folk arts rely on paper as their foundation, with paper-cutting being one of the most significant among them.



He then introduced the most essential aspects of paper-cutting culture from multiple perspectives, including its historical development, visual language, and symbolic meanings. Using a variety of paper-cutting works, he explained how different styles are applied in festive occasions, life rituals, and traditional ceremonies. During the hands-on session, Mr. XIONG guided students in creating the “five-fold round flower,” one of the most classic designs in Chinese paper-cutting. Its circular shape, vibrant red color, and culturally rich floral patterns have made it a long-lasting popular motif in Chinese folk art.





Following the instructor's guidance, the students carefully folded the paper, sketched intricate patterns, and meticulously cut out the shapes, watching as spring-blooming red flowers blossomed at their fingertips.

Art connects people, and China's rich intangible cultural heritage serves as a vital bridge for understanding Chinese culture. This paper-cutting salon not only showcased the aesthetic beauty of Chinese traditions but also delved into the spiritual and value dimensions of Chinese culture. GTCI remains committed to developing diverse educational resources, striving to fulfill its vision of becoming a "bridge for mutual learning between civilisations" for China and South Africa, while providing University of Venda students with more high-quality learning experiences.







## UNIVERSITY OF VENDA'S DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCE IN THE FACULTY OF SCIENCE, ENGINEERING & AGRICULTURE IS PROUD TO CO-HOST THE 55TH ANNUAL SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY FOR ANIMAL SCIENCE (SASAS) CONGRESS!

The University of Venda, in collaboration with the University of Limpopo (UL) and the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (LDARD), will co-host the **55th Annual Congress of the South African Society for Animal Science (SASAS)** from 8-10 July 2025 at Protea Hotel, The Ranch Resort, Polokwane.

This year's congress will be under the theme **"Thriving in diverse environments: optimised innovations and resilience in livestock-wildlife interactions"**

The congress expects to convene over 300 delegates, including leading livestock researchers, policymakers, industry executives, and students, who will engage in high-end discussions on scientific innovation and sustainable livestock production.

The UNIVEN is proud to be involved in an event which is of such strategic significance, as the congress will deliver the following:

### • Strengthen the University's scientific leadership in the province

Co-hosting the SASAS congress is in line with the UNIVEN's vision of engaged scholarship in delivering its mandate.

### • Promote livestock industry collaborations

The congress provides a platform to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders, including the agricultural research council (ARC), the department of agriculture, land reform and rural development (DALRRD), and major agribusinesses.

### • Promote post graduate student development

Through participation in academic presentations, networking sessions, and the SASAS Student Quiz and Debates, students will gain valuable exposure to cutting-edge research, industry trends, and career-building opportunities, to become locally relevant and globally competitive.

### • Stimulate development economic transformation

With a focus on building resilient livestock systems, productivity, and sustainability, the congress aligns with UNIVEN's mission to contribute to local and regional agricultural development and economic empowerment.

### Congress Highlights

#### • Plenary sessions and scientific panels

Will feature leading global experts on sustainable, climate resilient, and precision livestock production.

#### • Industry showcases and innovation exhibitions

Spotlights of groundbreaking advancements in livestock production and agribusiness solutions.

#### • Technical field excursions

Field excursions to outstanding local livestock enterprises, to showcase local innovative and sustainable livestock production practices.

### Participation and Engagement:

UNIVEN researchers and Post Graduate students will actively participate through:

- Presenting research papers and posters
- Attending plenary discussions and technical sessions
- Engaging with industry leaders and potential research funding agencies
- Chairing sessions

### For further information, please contact:

- **Prof. F Fushai** (HoD, Department of Animal Science, felix.fushai@univen.ac.za)
- **Dr. T Chitura** (Vice-Chairperson, Local Organising Committee, Department of Animal Science, Teedzai.Chitura@univen.ac.za)
- **Prof M Manjoro** (Local Organising Committee Member, Institute for Rural Development, Marizvikuro.Manjoro@univen.ac.za)
- **Prof TJ Baloyi** (Local Organising Committee Member, Department of Animal Science, Joseph.Baloyi@univen.ac.za)
- **Dr A Raseona** (Local Organising Committee Member, Department of Animal Science, andrea.raseona@univen.ac.za)

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



# UNIVEN VICE-CHANCELLOR'S WINTER GOLF TOURNAMENT 2025








**KILLARNEY COUNTRY CLUB, JOHANNESBURG**  
**04 JULY 2025**

**Format:** 4 Ball Alliance

**Entry Fee: R8000**  
-Inclusive of Green Fee  
-Golf Cart, Golf Shirt & Cap  
-Halfway Light Meal  
-Prize Giving Dinner

**Payment:** 30 June 2025

**Golf Registration:** 08H00 - 09H30  
**Tee-off:** 10H00

**The funds can be deposited into the University of Venda ABSA Account**  
Acc. Name: University of Venda  
Acc. Number: 1000 000 538  
Branch Name: Thohoyandou  
Branch Code: 33419  
Ref. Number: GOLF DAY 2025

**RSVP:** Mrs TR Muthadzwi  
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## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Venue: University of Venda  
Deadline: 30 June 2025

# 32<sup>nd</sup> SAAIR Annual Conference

## 27 - 31 October 2025

*Towards Excellence: Enhancing Funding Pathways and Student Outcomes through Human-Centric AI, Impactful Research, and Operational Intelligence*

**Subthemes**

- 🚀 Funding the Future
- 📊 From Insight to Impact
- 🌉 Bridging the Skills Gap
- 🌟 Ensuring Excellence
- 🌍 Global and Continental Commitments

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