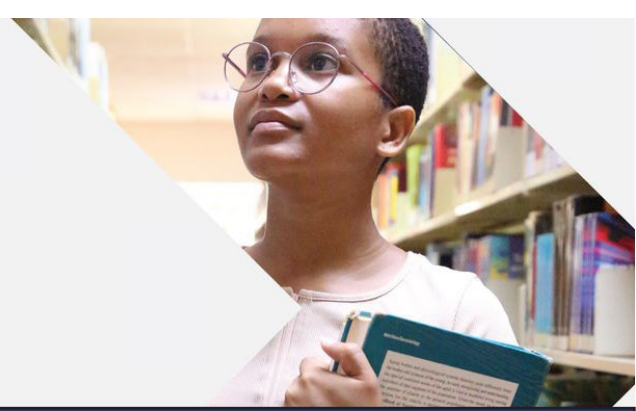




University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



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Agricultural Education Takes Center Stage as UNIVEN Engages MUAST



On the photo: The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UNIVEN, Professor Bernard Nthambeleni (third from right) and the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUAST, Professor Justice Nyamangara (third from left)

In a significant move towards fostering academic collaboration and agricultural innovation, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) and the Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (MUAST) held a strategic meeting aimed at exploring mutual opportunities for partnership.

The engagement took place at MUAST in Marondera, Zimbabwe and was attended by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUAST, Professor Justice Nyamangara, and the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UNIVEN, Professor Bernard Nthambeleni.

During the meeting, Professor Nyamangara outlined the rapid development and growth of MUASt.

He shared that the university was officially established in 2015 through an Act of Parliament (Chapter 25:29) and became independent in August 2017, after being incubated by the University of Zimbabwe since 2012.

The university began academic activities at the Dozmery Campus in 2013, expanded to the Cold Storage Commission (CSC) Complex in 2018, and further opened another campus at United Methodist Church (UMC) in 2021.

MUASt is currently constructing a world-class main campus at Cloverhill Farm, approximately 5 km from Marondera Town.

This development is part of the university's broader goal to transform Marondera into a university town and to establish the institution as a central pillar in local economic development.

"Marondera University is committed to being a modern, technology-driven institution offering sustainable, green agricultural solutions," said Professor Nyamangara.

UNIVEN's Director of Marketing, Branding, and Communication, Dr Takalani Dzaga, introduced the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda, Professor Nthambeleni to the audience, highlighting his extensive academic background and leadership experience.

Professor Nthambeleni emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts between the two institutions, particularly in addressing socio-economic challenges faced by communities.

"This partnership presents an opportunity to enhance food production, boost employment, and align our academic offerings with real-world needs," he said.

He also provided an overview of UNIVEN's four faculties and current institutional developments, stressing the need for universities to remain relevant and responsive to the development of society and the local economy.

Both institutions expressed a shared vision of leveraging their academic strengths in agriculture to drive innovation and sustainable development across Southern Africa.

Below are some of the photos from the collaborative farm visit by UNIVEN and MUASt representatives:



Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture Students and a Mentor Embark on Transformative International Sustainability Experience



From L-R: Dr Lutendo Mugwedi, Ms Shantel Ramotlou, Ms Karabo Musekwa and Ms Rirhandzu Shokane

Three master's students, Ms Karabo Musekwa, Ms Shantel Ramotlou, and Ms Rirhandzu Shokane, along with their mentor, Dr Lutendo Mugwedi, from the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture (FSEA), recently participated in the 2025 Transdisciplinary International Learning Lab (TILL). Held in South Africa's Garden Route Biosphere Reserve, the experience brought together students and mentors from Canada, Germany, Ghana, and Brazil as part of the Transdisciplinary Education Collaboration for Transformations in Sustainability (TRANSECTS) Programme.

Launched in 2021 under the leadership of Professor Maureen Reed at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, TRANSECTS is a global initiative aimed at transforming the way sustainability science is taught and practised. The programme is a collaboration among 21 international institutions, including the University of Venda, the University of Saskatchewan, Vancouver Island University,

Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, Rhodes University, and the University of Mpumalanga.

TRANSECTS fosters cross-cultural and interdisciplinary engagement to prepare students to address complex sustainability challenges. Through a combination of classroom instruction, fieldwork, and intercultural exchange, the TILL initiative offers a dynamic platform for developing the next generation of globally minded sustainability leaders.

The inaugural Learning Lab took place in Germany in 2023, followed by Canada in 2024. This year marked the first time the programme was hosted in South Africa, with a particular focus on Global South perspectives and local sustainability issues. Participants engaged with diverse stakeholders ranging from conservation agencies to community organisations and environmental NGOs, emphasising the importance of co-creating knowledge and

community-driven solutions.

Dr Lutendo Mugwedi, from the Department of Environmental Sciences, served as a mentor and led a collaborative research project in partnership with CapeNature, the authority managing the Robberg Nature Reserve. The project aimed to evaluate the cultural ecosystem services offered by the reserve. The research team co-developed a framework and conducted structured interviews and surveys, identifying services such as recreation, spiritual enrichment, cultural heritage, and knowledge sharing.

The three selected master's students, Ms Karabo Florence Musekwa, Ms Moloko Shantel Ramotlou, and Ms Rirhandzu Shokane, each contributed meaningfully to transdisciplinary research teams. They brought their environmental science expertise while learning from diverse disciplinary, cultural, and methodological perspectives. The experience empowered them to collaborate across sectors and borders, nurturing their skills as inclusive and adaptive problem-solvers.

Participant Reflections – TILL Programme Experience

The TILL programme offered a transformative experience for University of Venda students, fostering both academic growth and intercultural collaboration.

Dr Lutendo Mugwedi reflected on the importance of engaging with stakeholders beyond academia, noting how students were challenged to apply their knowledge in unpredictable, real-world contexts, an essential aspect of sustainability work. Karabo Musekwa highlighted his role in developing a method to assess carrying capacity at Robberg Nature Reserve, emphasising the creativity and adaptability required in transdisciplinary work with peers from South Africa, Canada, and Germany. For Shantel Ramotlou, the programme was both personally and professionally enriching, broadening her perspective through collaborative research into visitor values in protected areas. Rirhandzu Shokane expanded her qualitative research skills by analysing adaptive governance at the Knysna Estuary using MAXQDA software and working with the South African National Parks. Across these reflections, students consistently underscored the value of cultural exchange, communication, and practical application of academic knowledge. As Ms Ramotlou aptly summarised, the TILL experience fostered “a community of practice grounded in curiosity, collaboration, and accountability.” With the TRANSECTS collaboration continuing through 2028, the University of Venda remains committed to inclusive, globally connected sustainability education.

Facilities Management Department of the University of Venda partners with other organisations to spend 67 minutes cleaning Yellow House Residence

On 18 July 2025, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) Waste Management section under Facilities Management Department joined hands with Thulamela Municipality, Khano Eco Cycle, GreenZA, and the Universal Greening Organisation (UGO) to spend 67 minutes of Mandela Day with a cleaning awareness campaign and planting trees at Yellow House, one of the UNIVEN's accredited off-campus

student residences.

The day was commemorated under the theme ‘Waste Management Is Life Management: Get Involved – Reuse, Reduce, Recycle,’ while the objective of the campaign was to educate students regarding the significance of recycling and the advantages of effective waste management.



Group photo of participants of 67 minutes of Mandela Day with a cleaning awareness campaign and planting trees



UNIVEN Waste Management Manager, Ms Makhadzi Makheda welcomed the participants, highlighting the importance of cleanliness and waste management among off-campus student residences. She said, "Waste management is life management. The event aimed to raise awareness about the potential for recycling, reusing, and recovering items that are often thrown away." Makhadzi encouraged students to change their behaviours and work towards creating a cleaner and better living environment.



UNIVEN SRC President, Mr Vusi Mokoena rendered a message of support for the 67 Minutes of Mandela Day cleaning campaign and tree planting, saying that, "As we celebrate the legacy of our beloved Madiba, let us remember the importance of community service and taking care of our environment." Mokoena stated that students need to participate in this kind of initiatives with enthusiasm and dedication, uttering, "Let us strive to make a positive difference in our world, just as Madiba did." The event aimed to promote waste management and sustainability among students.



L-R: UNIVEN SRC President, Mr Vusi Mokoena planting a tree with other participants

The collaborative effort between UNIVEN and its partners, including Thulamela Municipality, Khano Eco Cycle, GreenZA, and Universal Greening Organisation (UGO) was a success as participants and students cleaned up Yellow House student residence, collecting waste materials and planting trees. Planting trees is important as it helps to beautify the environment, reduce air pollution, and promote sustainability. Through this initiative, the importance of community service, waste management, and environmental conservation was highlighted, inspiring students to act towards creating a better future.








CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Extended Deadline: 25 July 2025

32nd 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 📊💡
How are institutions using data to support sustainable financial planning, resource optimisation, and evidence-informed budgeting aligned to strategic and academic priorities?

From Insight to Impact 📊📈
What governance practices demonstrate how data, analytics, and digital tools drive transformation, and shape strategic decisions?

Bridging the Skills Gap 🎓💻
How are institutions preparing staff and students for a tech-enabled future through human-centred AI, curriculum reform, and analytics-informed design aligned to emerging workforce demands?

Ensuring Excellence 🏆📊
What innovations in quality assurance, institutional performance, and impact evaluation are driving continuous improvement and enhanced academic and operational outcomes?

Global and Continental Commitments 🌍📊
How does your institutional research advance the UN SDGs 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063, and how are these contributions integrated into your planning and performance frameworks?






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Types of Contributions

Contributed Paper 📄💡
The paper may present findings from a research study, a case report, or the application of a particular methodology in practice. It could also explore theoretical and conceptual issues relevant to the conference's theme and subthemes.

Panel Discussion 🗣️👥
This is a collegial discussion of a topic relevant to the conference theme and subthemes by several discussants. The outline for such a presentation should describe the topic and the central issues that will be explored.

Pre-Conference Workshop 🎓💡
A workshop should actively engage participants in discussing a topic aligned with the conference theme and subthemes. It must include a short introduction and clearly planned interactive activities. The outline should detail the topic, target audience, participant involvement, and intended outcomes.

Poster Presentation 📄📊
Posters can depict research or evaluation findings, outline a research process, or describe a program. The presenter(s) will be available at the poster for discussion at a specific time.

Demonstration 💡📺
A demonstration displays materials related to a project, research or practice. These may include a variety of formats, such as computer programs or multimedia presentations of a project.






Invitation For 2025 Disability Indaba

THEME: The importance of creating an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of their abilities, feels valued and supported.

 04 September 2025
 09h00
 UNIVEN Sports Hall

 owen.sirwali@univen.ac.za
 Ext.: 9167
 azwitamisi.gadisi@univen.ac.za
 Ext: 8716





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For Maintenance Enquiries
Contact.

maintenance@univen.ac.za
 Ext: 8222

To Find Out More
Contact.

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