



The University of Venda strengthened its community engagement partnership with the University of Pretoria



The Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation, and Commercialisation (DCEEIIC) convened a team to conduct a community engagement benchmarking visit at the University of Pretoria (UP) on 11 and 12 September 2025. The delegates were from faculties of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture, as well as Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education, the Green Technology Confucius Institute, and the Department of Student Affairs. The team included Prof Vhonani

Netshandama, Prof Lutendo Murulana, Prof Rendani Tshifhumulo, Dr Anyway Mikioni, Dr Dolphus Nevhudoli, Dr Mlungiseleli Ganto, Dr Victor Goliada, Ms Nnakiseni Nemadodzi, Ms Sheila Mphaphathe, Ms Tshinakaho Tshilamulele, Ms Vhuhwavho Khomunala, Ms Xiluva Meleni, Mr Rendani Nematswerani, Mr Mbulaheni Nedondwe, and Mr Fhatuwani Mudau. The benchmarking visit included community engagement and networking with the Community Engagement (CE) offices of higher education institutions in Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga,

and North-West, as well as sharing best practices and identifying networking and funding opportunities. Key aspects of this benchmarking visit and networking opportunity included: Learning how UP integrates curricular community engagement into its academic vision, engaging with key stakeholders, including staff, students, and community partners, discussing collaboration opportunities, sharing frameworks for student development and leadership capacity building, and lastly, site visits to villages where community projects are being

implemented. The goal was to identify best practices, assess potential collaborative opportunities, and gather insights into

enhancing community engagement and student entrepreneurship, aligning with the University of Venda's (UNIVEN) priorities..

The University of Pretoria delivered the first presentation, an overview of community engagement at the university, presented by Dr Eugene Machimana, Head of Curricular Community Engagement. The presentation began with the curricular community engagement vision for the University of Pretoria where they shared their goals which are: to enhance access and successful student learning, to strengthen the university research, international profile, and global engagement, to foster and sustain a transformed, inclusive, and equitable university community, to enhance institutional sustainability, and lastly to enhance the university social responsiveness and impact in the society.



In the picture: Dr Eugene Machimana, Head of Curricular Community Engagement, University of Pretoria

The presentation also outlined that all UP-registered students have a module in community engagement called Curricular Community Engagement. They also visit communities to engage with community members and participate in community work across various sectors. It was also presented that community engagement provides a space for innovation, allowing students

and community members to collaborate on innovative ideas. It was emphasised that when visiting the community, it is essential to greet community members in their own language, which shows respect and recognition of the community members. Dr Machimana emphasised that the community engagement work they do is influenced by and guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Dr Mlungiseleli Ganto, Interim Manager of the UNIVEN Centre for Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation, provided an overview of when the directorate began operating, along with its mission and vision up to 2040. He set out the units within the directorate. Dr Ganto also presented on the University of Venda's Entrepreneurship

Ecosystem Anchor programmes and projects, collaborating with stakeholders from various sectors. He emphasised that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) form part of all community engagements, as they are one of the niche areas at UNIVEN.



In the picture: Dr Mlu Ganto presenting about the Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation, and Commercialisation

To wrap up the first day, participants had the privilege of visiting Moja-Gabedi, a flagship community project of the University of Pretoria. At this location, UP students spend their time engaging in community service work. Moja Gabedi was once an unofficial dump for rubbish. In fact, for nearly 100 years, it stood as an ugly, empty lot on Festival Street, not far from the Hatfield campus. The unit of Community Engagement cleared the aboveground mess, but they were not prepared for what awaited them in November 2019 when they wanted to turn the soil.

Eventually, 3,000 tons of rubbish were removed during a gigantic effort. UP provided 3,000 tons

of topsoil and 200 tons of compost to kick-start the project. The first 120 fruit trees were planted. True to its name, the site was undergoing a transition. With the help of numerous UP students participating in community engagement activities related to their curriculum, Moja Gabedi began to take shape as a community urban garden. The men living at the nearby shelter, Reliable House, which was previously converted into a no-harm centre for homeless people addicted to drugs (offering on-site treatment as well as training by UP), also work in the gardens and grow their own vegetables.



In the picture: UNIVEN delegates at Moja-Gabedi

While some University of Venda (UNIVEN) delegates visited the Moja-Gabedi site, another group visited the Tuksnovation Incubation Centre, which was conceptualised in 2017 and officially launched in 2018. The Centre is managed by Mr Phindile Tshabangu (Centre Manager), supported by Ms Busiswa Gama (Finance and Administration Officer), Ms Matete Phala (Marketing Coordinator),

and several student assistants. Additionally, the Centre currently receives funding from the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA), Standard Bank, the University Technology Fund, and the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), enabling the Centre to implement interventions and programmes that support technology start-ups successfully.



In the picture: UNIVEN delegates at Tuksnovation

According to the Centre Manager, Tuksnovation operates as a private incubator located on the main campus of the University of Pretoria. Its primary focus is on supporting technology start-ups and innovation-driven enterprises. The incubator also hosts EDHE Intervarsity

Competitions, which are not commonly offered at many other universities from an incubation centre, but are usually hosted by the Economic Activation Office of a university. The Centre Manager further highlighted that an incubator could thrive when it specialises

in specific service areas, such as technology-based enterprises, agriculture, arts and crafts, baking, confectionery, and healthcare. He further expressed that while it is sometimes challenging to meet the targets set by funders, the incubator continues to work with groups of entrepreneurs in need of support and develops them into medium enterprises capable of meeting expected objectives and key performance indicators of the funders, which contributes to achieving the incubator's set objectives simultaneously. The Centre Manager also shared insights into the operations of the Office of Technology Transfer (OTT) at the University of Pretoria, explaining how Tuksnovation collaborates with the OTT and outlining their set procedures. Additionally, the discussions further explored the roles that units like the Economic Activation Office and the Green Technology Confucius Institute at UNIVEN can play in advancing and promoting entrepreneurship within rural-based communities. These formed some of the key takeaways for the UNIVEN delegates to take back and reflect upon.

On 12 September 2025, the UNIVEN delegation visited the Mamelodi campus for a community engagement and networking exchange, which included the University of Limpopo, the University of the Free State, the University of North West, the University of Johannesburg, the University of Witwatersrand, the University of Pretoria, and

Sefako Makgato Health Science University for community engagement and networking opportunities. Each university shared its best practices in community engagement, emphasising that students must lead community engagement, as this will expose them to real community challenges and help align their qualifications with the community's needs.

Some, such as the University of the Free State, highlighted that their students participate in community work every week throughout the year. The University of the Witwatersrand highlighted that its community engagement is guided and grounded by three key frameworks: the SDGs, transformational public engagement, and the quintuple health model. The University of Limpopo highlighted its skills development project, which assists grade 12 learners with digital skills and robotics (resonating with UNIVEN's Skills for the Future Programme), as well as UP's weekly digital literacy classes (emerging areas of collaboration). After the engagements, the delegates shared the challenges they face or encounter throughout their community engagement work. The University of the Free State offered to host the 2026 Community Engagement Workshop in person, promoting collaboration among different universities to share their thoughts and best practices in community engagement.



In the picture:: participants of the community engagement and networking session at UP Mamelodi Campus

Workshop outcomes and emerging collaborations

During the benchmarking workshop, several areas of collaboration emerged between UNIVEN and UP. These include joint initiatives in curricular community engagement, collaborative projects under the broader umbrella of community

engagement, and shared frameworks for student development, which enhance innovation, commercialisation, and community impact across institutions. Furthermore, other emerging collaboration for the University of Limpopo and UNIVEN's Skills for the Future Programme is the infusion of robotics programmes.

Dokotela Vho Livhuwani Tshikukuvhe vha tsivhudza vhathu nga ha Vhufa



Zwo itea ngei musanda wa Tshidzivhe nga la 28 Khubvumedzi 2025. Nga matsheloni fhala mudavhini ho vha na u pembelela vhufa kana mvelele yashu sa Vhavenda. Dokotela Vho Livhuwani Tshikukuvhe u bva kha Muhasho wa Sisiteme ya Ndivho yapo na Vhufa (IKS), nga

fhasi ha Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, vho rambiwa nga vha Muhasho wa Zwa Mitambo, Vhutsila na Mvelele, kha Tshitiriki tsha Masipala wa Vhembe u vha Muambi wa duvha musu vha tshi vala nwedzi wa Vhufa.



Vhanwe vha Vhahulisei vho dzhenelaho vhutambo ha Vhufa vho rangwa phanda nga Vhamusanda Vho Nkhangweleni Netshidzivhe (Mazwikule), vhane ndi vha vhutano u bva kha tshanda tsha Ula.

Dokotela Vho Tshikukuvhe vho amba na vhathu nga ha uri zwa vhufa a zwi tou vha zwithu zwa vha kale zwi tou vha lupfumo kha vhathu ngauri ndi vhutshilo kha rine, musi ri tshi sedza milambo a huna vhutshilo hu si na madi, zwisima zwashu zwine a zwi tsha thogomelwa vhathu vha lata mashika henengei othe othe. Thavha dzashu ndi lupfumo lune ra tea u dzi thogomela. Miri na madaka ashu ri a thogomele ri sa sokou remekanya nga u funa. Vhathu kha vha funze vhana vhavho mahayani nga mafhungo a sialala. Zwa hashu zwi khou ya zwi tshi khou fa zwi tshi thothela. Kha zwi thome u funzwa vhana hayani arali vhathu vha sa koni u dzula vhothe kha vha vha funze na nga zwileludzi zwa vhudavhidzani ngauri zwa u dzedza muliloni kana tshitangani ri tshi funza vhana zwidade, thai na ngano na nyimbo, vhunga zwi songo tsha dala nga nwambo

wa zwifhinga zwine ra vha khazwo.

Vhana vhashu kha vha gude u thetshelesa zwine vha funzwa nga vhabebi vhunga vha tshi tavhanya u fara zwithu zwine vha funzwa. Vhaaluwa vha songo shavha u funza vhana vha tshi vhona unga vho funzea u vha fhira ngauri vha kona u amba dzinwe nyambo dzi sili. Nwana munwe na munwe a tshi bebiwa u thoma tshikolo tshawe hayani a tshi khou funzwa nga vhabebi luambo, maitele a zwithu na u thonifha zwi gudiwa hayani.

Vhathu kha ri thogomele vhufa ha zwine ra vha nazwo. A si zwothe zwi si zwavhudi kha zwa kale, hu na zwavhudi, vhanwe vhana saintsi ine vha vha nayo ine yanga vha swikisa kule hone ngauri vha shavha u sa badelwa, a vha tsha kona u sumbedza vhukoni havho. vhathu kha vha fhiwe masimu vha lime zwiliwa.

Vhathu vhane vha ita khakhathi dza mitani na vhone kha vha fhiwe masimu vha lime u fhungudza nungo dzine vhavha nadzo dzine vha dzi shumisa u ita khakhathi. Vhathu kha vha tutshele kule na zwithu zwa u tambudza vhanwe na u binya.

ri na fhethu ha vhutsila na mvelele, ra dovha ra vha na Muziamu wa zwa Vhufa, hune ri na Dzata, Schoemansdale, Mapungubwe na hunwe hunzhi. Zwa zwino Vhembe i khou bveledza fhethu hune ra hu vhidza uri ndi tshi tangadzimeni he ha vha hu tshi lwiwa hone.

Vhathu vho tutuwedzwa kha zwa u thogomela zwiliwa zwine vha la misi yothe na uri vha songo lindela u la miroho nga Vhufa. Tshitiriki tsha Vhembe tsho fuma vhukuma,

Muhasho wa zwa Mitambo, Vhutsila na Mvelele vha ri arali muthu a na mafhungo ane a vha nao, a tama a tshi vhulungiwa kha kwame muhasho uri ri kone u vhulunga vhufa na mvelele.



Vho Gabriel Temudzani vha fhuuledza mpho yo nekedzwaho Dokotela Vho Livhuwani Tshikukuvhe



Havha ndi vhanwe vha muhasho wa Sisiteme dza Ndivho yapo na Vhufa (UNIVEN) vhe vha dzhenela u vho vhumambo: U bva kha tshanda tsha monde ndi Vho Thomani Kwindai, Dokotela vho Livhuwani Tshikukuvhe, Vho Divhani Muvhango, Ms Tsakani Nyoni



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