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From Vulnerability to Vigilance: UNIVEN Charts a Resilient Path through the 2026–2030 Strategic Risk Assessment Workshop

The 2026–2030 Strategic Risk Assessment Workshop, held on 10–11 November 2025 at Irene Country Lodge in Centurion, Pretoria, marked a defining milestone in the University of Venda (UNIVEN)'s pursuit of resilience, accountability, and excellence.

This two-day engagement brought together senior leadership, strategic planners, auditors, and operational experts to collectively identify and assess institutional risks that could affect the achievement of the University's strategic objectives over the next five years.



Group photo of the participants

Guided by Programme Director Mrs Beauty Mutheiwana, Director Supply Chain Management and Expenditure, the workshop opened with a high-level overview of UNIVEN's new Strategic Plan and key audit outcomes,

setting the tone for informed and collaborative discussions. Through dynamic breakaway sessions, participants explored root causes of institutional risks, evaluated existing controls, and formulated practical mitigation strategies.



In the photo, members of EMC L-R: Dr Joel Baloyi, Mr Botwe Kraziya, Prof Sebi Lekalakal-Mokgele, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, Mrs Mavis Madzhie and Prof Fulufhelo Netswera

The Strategic Risk Assessment Workshop featured four commissions, each tasked with identifying and presenting strategic risks for the 2026–2030 period. These commissions were creatively named after iconic African wildlife, symbolising strength and strategic insight. Commission 1 (The Rhinos) was chaired by Prof Sebi Lekalakala-Mokgele, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning. Commission, 2 (The Elephants)

was led by Prof Fulufhelo Netswera, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Postgraduate Studies. Commission 3 (The Lions) was chaired by Mr Botwe Kraziya, Chief Operating Officer, while Commission 4 (The Buffalos) was headed by Dr Joel Baloyi, University Registrar. Each chairperson guided their team in identifying institutional risks, ensuring a comprehensive and collaborative approach to strategic planning.



Mr Botwe Kraziya

In his opening remarks, Chief Operating Officer, Mr Botwe Kraziya, welcomed delegates on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, urging active participation throughout the workshop. Mr Kraziya emphasised that effective risk management is not merely a compliance exercise but a cornerstone of strategic success. His presentation reinforced

that aligning institutional risks with the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan ensures that key outcomes are achieved within acceptable risk parameters. Under the theme “From Vulnerability to Vigilance,” the workshop underscored the importance of adaptability, shared accountability, and forward-looking risk governance in navigating an evolving higher education landscape.



Dr Mutshinyalo Ratombo

Dr Mutshinyalo Ratombo, Director of Strategy and Risk, unpacked the University's new Strategic Plan, the first phase of UNIVEN's Vision 2040 Long-Term Strategy. Approved by Council on 12 September 2025, the plan aligns with the final stretch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and positions UNIVEN as “A University for Relevance, Excellence, and Impact.” Anchored in four strategic thrusts: Student-Centredness,

Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, People, Health and Environment, and Internationalisation and Partnerships, the plan aims to strengthen competitiveness, sustainability, and innovation. Dr Ratombo further outlined key planning instruments, including the Institutional Risk Register and Annual Performance Plan (APP), both of which will guide institutional performance and accountability over the five-year cycle.



Mrs Diana Makwarela

Adding a critical dimension to the discussions, Director of Internal Audit, Ms Diana Makwarela, delivered a presentation titled “Audit Insights Informing Strategic Risk Identification: Enhancing Risk Management through Comprehensive Audit Analysis.” She revealed how audit outcomes from 2021 to 2024, consolidated through a 2025 follow-up audit, inform governance maturity and strategic resilience. While UNIVEN achieved unqualified audit opinions

for four consecutive years, Ms Makwarela highlighted areas requiring continuous improvement, such as governance stability, data integrity, and timely implementation of audit recommendations. She also drew connections between UNIVEN’s risk landscape and continental trends reflected in the 2026 Africa Risk in Focus Report, including cybersecurity, financial sustainability, and digital transformation pressures.



Mr Tinyiko Sibiya

Further deepening the conversation, the Risk Officer, Mr Tinyiko Sibiya, emphasised that risk identification is the foundation of effective assessment and management. His presentation outlined a structured scoring framework to quantify the likelihood and impact of potential events, illustrating how risks can either hinder or enhance performance outcomes. He emphasised that collective vigilance, informed by data, planning, and accountability, is crucial

to establishing a culture of proactive risk management across all institutional levels.

On the final day, commissions presented their findings to the plenary, culminating in a prioritised institutional risk register led by Dr Ratombo. These insights will directly inform UNIVEN’s Risk Management Framework, ensuring strategic foresight and governance integration across all operations.



Prof Bernard Nthambeleni

Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, closed the Strategic Risk Workshop by commending participants for their active engagement in a crucial exercise that strengthens UNIVEN's transformation into a learning institution. He emphasised that effective risk management is inseparable from achieving the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan, reminding staff that success requires collective ownership of identified risks and proactive mitigation. Prof Nthambeleni urged that risk identification must be a bottom-up process, driven by those directly involved in operations, to ensure accountability and alignment with institutional goals. He further highlighted the importance of addressing audit findings and ensuring that risk champions provide timely feedback to sustain a culture of transparency and responsiveness.

Reflecting on the University's progress, Prof Nthambeleni underscored that UNIVEN has made significant investments in staff and

systems, which must now translate into stronger performance and governance. He praised the internal facilitation of the workshop, noting that the quality of discussions matched that of external consultants. He confirmed that a consolidated risk report will be submitted to the Audit and Risk Committee and other governance structures for approval before year-end. Prof Nthambeleni also called for coordinated institutional input on the new DHET reporting framework by 21 November 2025, urging staff and Senate members to contribute to this critical process. In closing, he expressed gratitude to the organisers, presenters, and participants for their commitment to advancing UNIVEN's strategic resilience and institutional excellence.

The 2026–2030 Strategic Risk Assessment Workshop reaffirmed UNIVEN's commitment to transforming vulnerability into vigilance, building a future-ready institution grounded in strategic foresight, sustainable growth, and unwavering accountability.

UNIVEN Shines Nationally: Recognised for Hosting South Africa's Best Careers Exhibition

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) continues to raise the bar in student recruitment excellence, earning national recognition of achievement from the Careers Exhibition and Information Association (CEIA) for its exceptional organisation and impact in hosting one of the country's most successful and well-attended career exhibitions.



CEIA bestowed this prestigious recognition upon UNIVEN during its 2025 Annual General Meeting and Conference, held from 22 to 24 October 2025 in Port Alfred, Eastern Cape. The conference, which brings together student recruitment professionals, financial aid representatives, and education strategists from across Southern Africa, celebrates institutions that excel in empowering prospective students with the information and opportunities that shape their futures. UNIVEN's recognition stems

from the remarkably executed Careers Exhibition, hosted from 5 to 9 May 2025, which brought together over 14,900 Grade 12 learners from 157 schools across the Vhembe East District. The event, a collaborative effort between the University of Venda, Department of Education (Vhembe East District), and CEIA, also attracted exhibitors representing universities, TVET and private institutions, funding bodies, private companies and government departments.



UNIVEN Assistant Schools Liaison Officer, Mr Justice Lebopa, from the Department of Marketing, Branding and Communication, was recognised for his outstanding dedication in fostering nationwide collaboration during his tenure as Chairperson of the Careers Exhibition and Information Association (CEIA) representing Limpopo Province. Under his leadership, he successfully coordinated career exhibitions across all five districts of the province, earning Limpopo recognition from CEIA as the best host of exhibitions nationally.

Beyond its impressive numbers, the exhibition stood out for its organisation, community engagement, and impact, providing learners with first hand access to information on university applications, financial aid, and career guidance. It also provided exhibitors with a meaningful platform to interact with prospective students and partners. Reflecting on this national achievement, Dr Takalani

Dzaga, Director of Marketing, Branding and Communication, remarked, "This award is more than a recognition of a single event, it is a celebration of teamwork, vision, and our collective commitment to the future of prospective students. Hosting an exhibition of this scale demanded collaboration across departments, schools, and external partners. The remarkable turnout, energy, and positive feedback we received reaffirm that UNIVEN is not merely a participant in the national recruitment landscape, but a leader actively shaping it."

UNIVEN's success at the CEIA AGM and Conference reinforces its standing as a forward-thinking institution that continuously sets new standards in student engagement and educational outreach. The recognition also serves as an inspiration for continued excellence in creating opportunities that ignite ambition and shape bright futures.

UNIVEN Academics Excel in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management Programme



In the picture, L-R: Adv Prof Pfarelo Matshidze and Dr Shonisani Ramashia

Two senior academics from the University of Venda have achieved remarkable success in their postgraduate studies at Botho University, Botswana. Adv Prof Pfarelo Matshidze, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, and Dr Shonisani Ramashia, Head of the Department of Food Science and Technology in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, successfully graduated with a Master of Educational Leadership and Management degree on 24 October 2025.



Both scholars graduated with distinctions, with Adv Prof Matshidze earning two prestigious awards for Best Student in the Programme and Best Overall Student in the Faculty of Health and Education.

Their academic excellence reflects a deep commitment to professional growth, leadership

development, and the advancement of higher education. The programme has significantly enhanced their expertise in educational leadership, policy implementation, and research, empowering them to lead educational reforms and promote inclusive practices across higher education institutions.



The two-year programme, which ran from 31 August 2023 to 31 August 2025, was completed through online learning and fully funded by UNIVEN's Staff Development Unit as part of the University's strategic initiative to build internal capacity in leadership, research, and management.

Participants gained an in-depth understanding of leadership theories, educational policy, curriculum development, and management practices relevant to both basic and higher education systems. The programme also strengthened competencies in strategic decision-making, quality assurance, human resource management, and the integration of educational technology in teaching and learning.

Strong institutional support was provided by Prof Tawanda Runhare, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (FHSSE), and Prof Natasha Potgieter, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture (FSEA). The Disability Unit also played a crucial role by granting permission for data collection from students with disabilities, which formed part of the research component. The research focused on inclusive education and leadership practices, contributing to the ongoing efforts to enhance learning experiences and accessibility

for students with disabilities at UNIVEN and beyond.

In congratulating the two, Prof Tawanda Runhare, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, congratulated Adv Prof Matshidze and Dr Ramashia, describing their achievement as a reflection of the University's growing culture of excellence and continuous learning. He added, "We are extremely proud of this remarkable accomplishment. It demonstrates that with dedication, passion, and institutional support, our staff can excel beyond expectations. Their success serves as a great inspiration to other academics who aspire to further their studies and contribute meaningfully to the University's vision of producing globally competitive graduates." Prof Natasha Potgieter, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, also applauded the two academics for their hard work and leadership. She said, "This achievement highlights the value of investing in staff development. Dr Ramashia and Adv Prof Matshidze have shown exceptional commitment to professional and academic growth. Their success will undoubtedly strengthen our collective efforts to advance excellence in research, teaching, and leadership within the University."

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INVITATION

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND
PRINCIPAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
VENDA, **PROF BERNARD NTHAMBELENI**
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO THE

LAUNCH OF CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE AND INSTITUTES



LIST OF CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE AND INSTITUTES

- Es'kia Mphahlele Centre for National and Global Dialogue (EMCNGD)
- Ismail Mahomed Centre for Human and Peoples' Rights (IMCHPR)
- Centre of Excellence in Mass Spectrometry (CEMS)
- MER Mathivha Centre for African Languages, Arts and Culture (MMCALC)
- Vuwani Science Resource Centre (VSRC)
- African Musicology Institute (AMI)
- OR Tambo Institute of Governance and Policy Studies (ORTIGPS)
- Institute for Pathogen and Global Health Research (IPGHR)
- Institute for Rural Development (IRD)

VENUE: UNIVERSITY OF VENDA STADIUM | TIME: 10H00

This prestigious event marks a significant milestone in our academic and research journey, showcasing the establishment of new centres of excellence and institutes that will drive innovation, collaboration, and excellence across disciplines.

Kindly RSVP by 10 November 2025 to: Mrs Esther Munano – ester.munano@univen.ac.za
(082 801 9361) | **Mrs Tshililo Muthadzwi** – Tshililo.muthadzwi@univen.ac.za (082 868 1988)
Ms Fulufhelo Nonge – fulufhelo.nonge@univen.ac.za (064 759 8811)

We look forward to your presence.