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Applause to the UNIVEN leadership by the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education for demonstrating stability, strategic vision, and dedication to student success



The morning sun rose gently over Thohoyandou on Monday, 26 January 2026, casting warm light across the University of Venda's sprawling campus. The University hosted the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education—a vital engagement marking a moment of accountability, reflection, and progress. By 08:30, the Main Administration Building

was already buzzing. Members of the Portfolio Committee, led by the Chairperson, Hon Tebogo Letsie, arrived to warm welcomes from the University's leadership, who ushered them toward the Executive Management Boardroom. The atmosphere was cordial but focused—everyone understood the significance of the day.



The formal meeting at the University Auditorium was the emotional heart of the visit. There, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee delivered remarks that resonated deeply with all in attendance.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal outlined progress on infrastructure development, financial sustainability, academic performance, research output, and student support initiatives. Other presentations were made by the Chairperson of the Institutional Forum, Prof Thizwilondi Mudau; the SRC President, Mr Tirhani Mathye; the NEHAWU Secretary and President, Mr Ambros Mogashoa; and Dr Justice Makhanikhe, respectively. The committee listened attentively, taking notes and engaging with thoughtful questions that demonstrated a deep interest in the University's journey.



During this session, the Chairperson of Council, Mr Rudzani Mushweu, delivered welcome remarks, after which the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the University's achievements, challenges, and strategic priorities.



The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee expressed confidence in the University's commitment to transformation, acknowledging the steps taken to improve governance, enhance teaching and learning environments, and expand community engagement initiatives. He emphasised that the University of Venda plays a critical role in advancing access to higher education—particularly for rural and historically disadvantaged communities.



In his concluding remarks, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee applauded the University's leadership for demonstrating stability, strategic vision, and dedication to student success. At the same time, he urged the institution to continue strengthening areas such as infrastructure maintenance, research capacity building, and partnerships with industry and government.

Above all, the Chairperson encouraged the University to remain steadfast in its mission to empower the region, stating, "The work done here does not only uplift the University—it uplifts families, communities, and the future of our nation."

As the visit concluded at 17:00, a sense of accomplishment filled the air. The day had been constructive, honest, and forward-looking. Council, Executive Management, Staff, and students felt seen and heard, while the Portfolio Committee departed with a deeper appreciation of the University's progress and potential. The visit became more than an oversight exercise—it became a reaffirmation of the University of Venda's place as a beacon of opportunity and transformation in South Africa's higher education landscape.



Seasoned Finance Leader Appointed as UNIVEN Chief Financial Officer

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) has appointed Mrs Mavis Madzhie as its Chief Financial Officer (CFO) with effect from 1 January 2026, following a rigorous, transparent, and Council-approved recruitment process.

The appointment forms part of the University's strategic restructuring of its executive leadership, which included the creation of the Chief Operating Officer (COO) position to strengthen operational

efficiency and institutional coordination.

Mrs Madzhie brings over 20 years of senior financial management experience and previously served as UNIVEN's Director: Financial Management and Reporting. Her career includes leadership roles as Director of Finance at the Gauteng Provincial Legislature and Chief Financial Officer at Thulamela Municipality.



She holds a BCom Accounting degree from UNIVEN, CTA qualifications from UNISA, and is a Chartered Accountant (CA(SA)). Congratulating her on the appointment, UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Bernard Nthambeleni, welcomed Mrs Madzhie to the University's Executive Management, noting that her appointment strengthens executive capacity and ensures continuity in financial leadership. He wished her well in her new role and called on the University community to support her as she assumes this strategic executive responsibility. Mrs Madzhie's appointment underscores UNIVEN's commitment to strong governance, financial sustainability, and institutional excellence.

University of Venda Enhances Global Research Engagement at Madiba Nexus International Workshop

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) continues to strengthen its global research engagement through the participation of Professor Lufuno Makhado from the Department of Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, at the Madiba Nexus International Workshop: Advancing Balanced North-South Research Partnerships. The workshop was held from 20 to 23 January 2026 at Nelson Mandela University's Summerstrand South Campus.



Prof Lufuno Makhado during engagement at the Mandela Nexus International Workshop

Renowned for its commitment to fostering equitable, ethical, and impactful global research collaborations, the workshop brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including researchers, research managers, institutional leaders, and funding partners. Supported by the British Academy through its Equitable Partnerships Workshops Follow-On Funding, the initiative provided a dynamic platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and capacity building. In collaboration with several prestigious universities from Africa and beyond, the workshop aimed to enhance the quality, reach, and sustainability of research through inclusive partnerships that address pressing global challenges. Participants engaged in rich discussions and shared best practices, underscoring the central role of collaboration in advancing innovation and knowledge across borders.



Prof Azwinndini Muronga, DVC Research, Innovation and Internalisation, Nelson Mandela University; and Prof Peter Wisiuba Bukhala, DVC Planning, Research and Innovation (PRI), Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

The workshop officially opened with welcoming remarks from two Deputy Vice-Chancellors: Professor Muronga of Nelson Mandela University, responsible for Research, Innovation, and Internationalisation, and Professor Bukhala of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) in Kenya, overseeing Planning, Research, and Innovation. Both leaders reaffirmed their institutions' commitment to fostering equitable and mutually beneficial partnerships. They emphasised the importance of strengthening staff competencies within Research and Internationalisation and Partnerships Directorates to support intentional, sustainable collaborations that contribute meaningfully to academic excellence and community development.



Dr Ying Chen from the University of Southampton, UK and Dr Conor Snowden from the University of Edinburgh, UK

Professor Makhado participated primarily in the Research Management Stream, which focused on strengthening institutional systems and

research support across the entire research lifecycle. Sessions in this stream were facilitated by leading experts, including Dr Snowden from the University of Edinburgh, Dr Chen from the University of Southampton, and Dr Palesa Mothapo from Nelson Mandela University. Key topics included partnership development, proposal submission, award management, project closure, and the evolving role of research offices. Critical discussions on equity in international research collaborations featured prominently, particularly in sessions such as Reflecting on Equity: Where Imbalances Arise and Moving Toward Equitable Partnerships. These engagements highlighted how institutional policies, administrative practices, and power dynamics influence research outcomes, providing Professor Makhado with valuable insights to support the University of Venda's growing international research footprint.

Running concurrently with the Research Management Stream was the Researcher Stream, which focused on postgraduate supervision and academic leadership. Led by Dr Julie Reeves from the University of Southampton, this stream emphasised supervisor development through train-the-trainer models and reflective practices to enhance research quality and mentorship across diverse institutional contexts.

A key highlight of Professor Makhado's participation was his involvement in the Madiba Nexus Funders' Roundtable, held on 21 January 2026. Facilitated by Ms Maria Norton (University of Southampton) and Dr Palesa Mothapo (Nelson Mandela University), the roundtable convened public and private funders, institutional leaders, researchers, and research managers under Chatham House rules. Discussions focused on funding priorities, policy frameworks, expectations for equitable partnerships, performance indicators, and emerging measures of research success. This engagement offered Professor Makhado valuable insights into funders' perspectives and global trends in research financing, strengthening his capacity to engage ethically and strategically in international funding opportunities.



Prof Nelson Torto, The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) Senior Science Fellow; Dr Mellanie Cilliers, Stellenbosch University; Prof. P.W. Bukhala, DVC PRI, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) in Kenya; Prof L Makhado; Dr Nokhuthula Mchunu, NRF; Dr Palesa Natasha Mothapho, Director Research Support and Management, NMU; Dr Denise Schael, Director Institute for Coastal and Marine Research (CMR), NMU; Mr Zolani Dyosi, NRF; and Ms Ms Maria Norton, University of Southampton, UK, Posing after the Funders' Round Table Discussion

The second day of the workshop concluded with a Gala Dinner, highlighted by an inspiring address from the Vice-Chancellor of Nelson Mandela University, Professor Sibongile Muthwa. Her message called for the strengthening of equitable, long-term partnerships grounded in mutual benefit. She emphasised the importance of expanding the Madiba Nexus beyond its current scope and advocated for a balanced approach that values both North-South and South-South collaborations. Her address resonated strongly with participants, reinforcing a shared commitment to sustainable partnerships that honour Nelson Mandela's legacy.

The Madiba Nexus International Workshop attracted strong participation from leading institutions, including the University of Edinburgh, the University of Southampton, Nelson Mandela University, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, and the Science for Africa Foundation. The broader Madiba Nexus network also included representatives from the University of Venda, University of Zululand, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Stellenbosch University, and Walter Sisulu University, further strengthening South-South and North-South institutional linkages.

Professor Makhado's participation significantly enhanced the University of Venda's visibility and strategic positioning within global networks of higher education and research management. The knowledge and insights gained will inform the university's research governance, capacity development initiatives, and partnership strategies, particularly within the Department of Public Health and the broader research enterprise. Through Professor Makhado's active engagement at both technical and strategic levels, the University of Venda reaffirms its commitment to nurturing equitable global research partnerships and positioning itself as a key contributor to inclusive, high-impact research ecosystems at national, continental, and international levels.



NEW VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

VISION AND MISSION

"Vision is the art of seeing the invisible"
~ Jonathan Swift

Our vision defines what we want to become by 2040. It is an aspirational description of what we would like to achieve in the long term.



VISION

A University leading in engaged scholarship



MISSION

The University of Venda produces graduates who are locally relevant and globally competitive

INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

The University of Venda is guided by a set of core institutional values that shape its culture, inform decision-making, and underpin the university's strategic priorities. These values include:



EXCELLENCE

Striving for the highest standards in teaching, research, and service



INTEGRITY

Acting with honesty, ethics, and transparency in all we do



ACCOUNTABILITY

Taking responsibility for our actions and delivering on our commitments



DIVERSITY

Embracing and promoting inclusivity, equity, and different perspectives



RESPECT

Valuing the dignity and contributions of every individual

POSITIONING STATEMENT

Positioning the University of Venda for Relevance, Excellence and Impact