

Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA



University of Venda
Creating future leaders

From UNIVEN Lecture Halls to Global Labs: Given Maboko's Biotech Mission for Africa

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) continues to produce graduates who are shaping the future of global science, technology, and entrepreneurship. Among them is H.E. Given Mapaya Maboko, a Biochemistry and Microbiology alumnus who has transformed academic knowledge into market-driven biotechnology solutions. As Founder and Executive Chair of Camellia Innovations (Pty) Ltd, he is advancing antimicrobial technologies, bioeconomy interventions, and science-led enterprises to boost Africa's global competitiveness. Reflecting on his formative years, Maboko notes, "My journey in innovation began in the lecture rooms of UNIVEN. I learned that science becomes powerful when it serves society."

Guided by the belief that innovation must extend beyond laboratory walls, Maboko has created platforms that convert ideas into enterprises. As Deputy President of ENACTUS UNIVEN, he helps cultivate an entrepreneurial ecosystem that empowers students to pitch, prototype, and commercialise impactful solutions.

The University of Venda celebrates Given Maboko's achievements as a testament to producing graduates who turn knowledge into impact. His journey from UNIVEN to leading a biotechnology enterprise exemplifies the university's vision of nurturing innovators driving scientific and entrepreneurial growth

His mentorship also spans his roles as a Ngwekazi Ambassador and Entrepreneurial Education Facilitator, where he equips young innovators with leadership and business skills. This commitment to youth development has earned him several accolades, including Emerging Innovator 2025/26, YAE Top 30 Finalist recognition, honours at the Mzansi Small Business Awards, and the overall win at the TIA Innovation Challenge.

Maboko's influence has expanded beyond South Africa through international exchanges. As a Universal Greening Organisation (UGO) Fellow in the 2025 cohort and a participant in EVB THENSA 2025, he deepened his exposure to sustainability, trade, and innovation ecosystems across the continent. He is currently a Queen's University Jim Leech Mastercard Foundation Fellow, strengthening his expertise in innovation management, commercialisation, and global engagement. His work in science diplomacy has included engagements in Barcelona, where he positioned African biotechnology within emerging policy and market frameworks. "Africa's scientific voice must be heard in global policy conversations," he says.

At the core of Camellia Innovations is Mellivarin, a bee-derived antimicrobial peptide designed to address the escalating global crisis of antimicrobial resistance. Developed in collaboration with a biotechnology partner in France, Mellivarin has advanced to a Certificate of Analysis, signalling readiness for pharmaceutical and topical therapeutic development. Alongside this milestone, Maboko is also progressing a diabetic health sachet, reflecting his philosophy that "when ideas meet real innovators, communities can be transformed." These innovations position Camellia as a rising force in Africa's biotech manufacturing landscape.

Despite his growing global presence, Maboko remains deeply connected to his roots in the dusty streets of Pax Intransitibus in Limpopo. Often described as a leader with "bulldog tenacity," he is driven by a vision to reshape Africa's manufacturing landscape, expand local production, and increase the export of African biotechnology products. His recent selection to participate in the Neoteric Summit in New York marks another milestone, placing a South African youth innovator at the intersection of science, policy, trade, and global industrial collaboration.



Through Camellia Innovations, policy engagement, and science diplomacy, he continues to affirm that African innovation is not emerging, but global-ready, investable, and transformative.

The University of Venda has praised Given Maboko's achievements as a powerful reflection of the institution's commitment to producing socially responsive graduates who turn knowledge into impact. University spokesperson, Dr Takalani Dzaga noted that Maboko embodies UNIVEN's vision of nurturing innovators who address real-world challenges through science, entrepreneurship, and community engagement. His journey from the lecture halls to leading a biotechnology enterprise and representing African innovation on global platforms was described as both inspiring and symbolic of the university's role in shaping future-ready leaders. The University further commended his dedication to youth empowerment and science-driven enterprise, expressing confidence that his work through Camellia Innovations will continue to elevate African biotechnology and create opportunities for inclusive economic growth.

Read inside

From UNIVEN Lecture Halls to Global Labs: Given Maboko's Biotech Mission for Africa	1
FSEA Welcomes the 2026 First-Year Cohort Through a Comprehensive Orientation Programme	2
Grade 12 Learners Urged to Dream Big at University of Venda Motivation Day	4
Participation on the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Training Program for Community-Based Research at Nelson Mandela University	5
University of Venda Participates in UCDP Short Course Review and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework Workshop	6
A New Era for Faculty Advisors in Driving Institutional Impact	7

FSEA Welcomes the 2026 First-Year Cohort Through a Comprehensive Orientation Programme



First-year students of the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture (FSEA)

The Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture (FSEA) successfully hosted a first-year orientation programme for the 2026 academic cohort on 2 February 2026 at the University of Venda Auditorium Hall. The orientation aimed to formally welcome new students into the faculty and to provide essential academic, administrative, and student support information to facilitate a smooth transition into university life. Approximately 775 first-year students attended the event.



Prof Natasha Potgieter, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture

In her keynote address, Prof Potgieter thanked the students for choosing the University of Venda as their institution of higher learning. She provided an overview of the university's history, noting that Univen was established in 1982 and celebrated its 40th anniversary

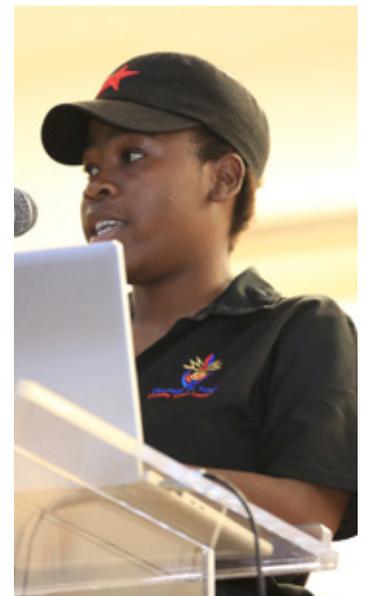
in 2022. Prof. Potgieter highlighted that UNIVEN is a comprehensive university with an estimated student population of 17,000. She further outlined the university's vision of leading in engaged scholarship and its mission of producing graduates who are locally relevant and globally competitive. Her address also covered the structure of the faculty, including academic departments, streams, and research chairs, as well as staff establishment statistics, such as NRF-rated researchers, academics holding doctoral qualifications, and postdoctoral fellows. In addition, she highlighted the university's niche areas, including African Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Transformative Education, Law and Transformative Justice, Sustainable Development, Digital Transformation, and One Health. She concluded by encouraging students to seek support whenever challenges arise and assured them of the faculty leadership's commitment to student success.

The programme set a strong foundation for the 2026 cohort as they begin their academic journey within the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture



Prof Lutendo Murulana, Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies

Prof Murulana, established a welcoming and engaging atmosphere, setting a positive tone for the orientation and encouraging active student participation throughout the session.



Ms Thokozile Dube, SRC Minister of Education

Ms Dube, welcomed the first-year students and described the orientation as the beginning of a significant academic journey. She emphasised the SRC's role in supporting, protecting, and advocating for students and reassured them that support structures are in place to assist them during challenging times. She encouraged students to make effective use of academic resources such as tutors and the library.

FSEA Welcomes the 2026 First-Year Cohort Through a Comprehensive Orientation Programme continued...



Staff members of the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture



Mr Rotondwa Khalushi, Faculty Student Representative Chairperson

Mr Khalushi, addressed students with a unifying and motivational message that fostered a sense of belonging and collective identity. He explained the formal processes for reporting academic and administrative challenges, advising students to engage class representatives or lecturers for escalation to the Faculty Student Council. He highlighted the availability of support services, including counselling, campus health, tutors, and student SI programmes, and encouraged students to seek assistance proactively. Mr. Khalushi also emphasised the importance of regular attendance at lectures, tutorials, and practical sessions.

Representing Faculty Administration, Mr Mishumo Nengwekhulu provided guidance on key administrative matters. He advised students to familiarise themselves with the faculty calendar and to ensure that their registered modules align with those listed in the calendar. Students were encouraged to verify their personal information on the university system, including ensuring that their names correspond with their identity documents. He further explained examination processes, including aegrotat and supplementary examinations, as well as subminimum requirements, and emphasized the importance of updating next-of-kin details.

The Head of Campus Health, Mr Edward Dongola, presented an overview of health and wellness services available to students and staff. He explained that Campus Health provides primary health care, HIV and AIDS services, peer education, and 24-hour emergency services, supported by ambulance and shuttle services. He further highlighted health promotion initiatives, testing services, referrals to local hospitals,

and awareness programmes addressing gender-based violence, substance abuse, and mental health.

Dr Refilwe Pila-Nemutandani, representing the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL), outlined academic development and student support services available through the directorate. She explained the functions of the Disability Unit, Academic Development Unit, E-Learning Unit, and Career Development Unit. She also introduced the Thoya Ndhzie Project, which provides food and essential items to disadvantaged students who do not receive bursary funding.

Mr Donald Morema, from the Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation (DCEEIC), informed students about opportunities related to entrepreneurship development, innovation support, mentorship, and community engagement initiatives. He encouraged students to participate in these programmes and indicated that further information would be communicated through official university email channels.

Additional presentations were delivered by Ms Nare Ramaboea from the University Library, who highlighted library services and information literacy training, and Mr Maanda Nemaxwi from Protection Services, who addressed campus safety measures and emphasized the importance of vigilance, responsible behaviour, and student well-being.

The orientation programme also featured presentations by Heads of Departments and departmental representatives, who provided overviews of academic programmes, departmental structures, and potential career pathways. All fifteen departments within the faculty were represented.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Ms Carlifonia Malatji, Administration Officer in the Office of the Executive Dean, on behalf of the Faculty Manager, Mrs Julia Sigama. She expressed appreciation to faculty leadership, staff members, support directorates, and service departments for their contributions to the successful organisation of the event. She also thanked the first-year students for their participation and encouraged them to attend departmental orientation sessions as part of their continued integration into the faculty and the university.

The comprehensive programme ensured that first-year students were well informed about the academic, administrative, health, safety, and developmental support structures available to them, reinforcing the faculty's commitment to a supportive and enabling learning environment



Members of the Office of the Executive Dean pose for a photo after the successful coordination and organisation of the 2026 FSEA First-Year Orientation Programme

Grade 12 Learners Urged to Dream Big at University of Venda Motivation Day



In the picture: Mulenzhe Development Trust task team with Dr Livhuwani Tshikukuvhe, Dr Israel Mulaudzi, Dr Makondeleli Tshikosi at Mukhwantheli Secondary School

In her address, Dr Livhuwani Tshikukuvhe reflected on her own journey from being a learner at Mavhe Secondary School to becoming a university lecturer, entrepreneur, and motivational speaker. She spoke candidly about repeating grades and studying under extremely difficult conditions, including long daily walks to school and a lack of electricity and running water at home. Despite these obstacles, she remained focused and refused to give up, eventually earning her doctorate. She urged learners to stay disciplined, create study timetables, use their Grade 11 results as a benchmark, and take advantage of the resources now available to them. She also encouraged parents to support their children and teachers, and called on educators to work together and draw on the experience of retired professionals to improve results.

Dr Israel Creleanor Mulaudzi, also a former learner who once repeated Grade 12, delivered a powerful message of resilience and possibility. Now an educator, farmer, and entrepreneur, she reminded learners that their background does not determine their destination. She emphasised that education opens doors to opportunities, recognition, and bursaries, and that excellence is rewarded at district, provincial, and national levels. Dr Mukondeleli Tshikosi reinforced the importance of parental support and balanced academic effort, warning learners not to neglect subjects such as Home Language and Life Orientation. The speakers collectively urged the Class of 2026 to embrace discipline, dedication, and determination, assuring them that the best chapter of their lives still lies ahead.



Grade 12 learners at Mukhwantheli Secondary School with the team.



Grade 12 Learners at Johannes Ramavhoya with the principal in black, Mulalo Ramovha, Dr Mukondeleli Tshikosi, Dr Livhuwani Tshikukuvhe, and Dr Israel Mulaudzi

The speakers urged the Class of 2026 to stay disciplined and embrace learning opportunities

Participation on the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Training Program for Community-Based Research at Nelson Mandela University



In the picture, a group of participants from left to right: University of Gulu, Uganda, Rhodes University, Eduvos, North-West University, University of Venda, University of the Free State, Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology in Tanzania, Nelson Mandela University, and Human Science Resource Centre during the K4C CBPR residential training.

Staff members from the Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation, Dr Nyadzani Dolphus Nevhudoli and Ms Nnakiseni Nemadodzi, recently participated in the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Training Programme on Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), hosted by Nelson Mandela University (NMU).

The programme was delivered primarily online and culminated in an intensive 10-day residential training held at NMU from 25 January to 5 February 2026. The residential component provided participants with an immersive learning environment focused on strengthening theory, practice, and ethical approaches to community-engaged research.

The training was facilitated by Dr David Monk (University of Gulu, Uganda), Professor Lesley Wood (North-West University), and Dr Karen Venter (University of the Free State). It was convened under the auspices of the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Global Consortium and the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education. The programme forms part of the broader University Community Development Partnership (UCDP) project on Higher Education Engaged Teaching and Research for Societal Impact. This collaborative initiative is jointly implemented by the University of Venda, Rhodes University, Mangosuthu University of Technology, and Eduvos, contributing to the Southern Centre of the Knowledge for Change (K4C) hubs.

The primary objective of the residential programme was to strengthen institutional and individual capacity in Community-Based Participatory Research, advance understanding of socially responsive scholarship, and foster a sustainable regional community of practice among African scholars, practitioners, and community-engaged researchers. Strong emphasis was placed on ethical research partnerships, knowledge co-creation with communities, and the role of higher education in addressing pressing societal challenges. This multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral cohort



Pictured from Left to Right: Dr David Monk (University of Gulu, Uganda), Prof Lesley Wood (North-West University), Dr Nyadzani Dolphus Nevhudoli (UNIVEN), and Dr Karen Venter (Free State University).



In Picture from Left to Right : Dr David Monk (University of Gulu, Uganda), Prof Lesley Wood (North-West University), Ms Nnakiseni Nemadodzi (UNIVEN), and Dr Karen Venter (Free State University)

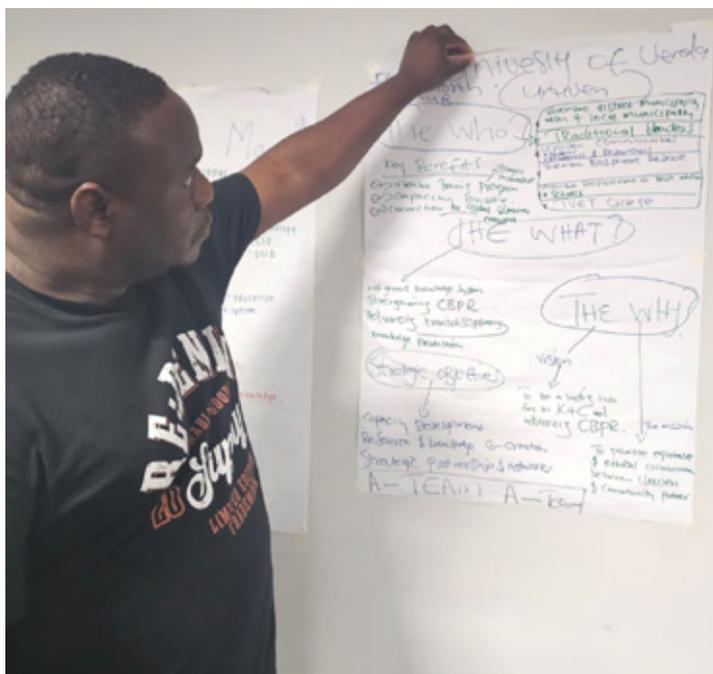
enabled rich cross-learning and collaborative engagement through structured workshops, reflective dialogues, community-based exercises, and peer mentorship.

The lesson learned includes the importance of ethical, community-centred research and the co-creation of knowledge, showing that meaningful impact arises when communities are actively engaged and share ownership of outcomes, and that multidisciplinary collaboration and the integration of theory and practice strengthened research relevance and problem-solving capacity, while reflective practice and mentorship supported continuous learning and professional growth. These lessons collectively highlight strategies for strengthening community-based participatory re-search and building sustainable, socially impactful partnerships.

UNIVEN's participation in the K4C training strengthens the University's commitment to community-engaged research and scholarship and positions it to contribute meaningfully to regional and continental knowledge-sharing initiatives within the K4C network. The training outcomes further align with the objectives of the Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation, particularly in building institutional capacity in CBPR, enhancing understanding of socially responsive scholarship, and supporting the establishment of a regional network of community-engaged scholars.

The Programme marks an important step in strengthening UNIVEN's capacity to advance ethical, community-engaged research that drives meaningful and sustainable societal impact

University of Venda Participates in UCDP Short Course Review and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework Workshop



Dr Dolphus Nevhudoli presenting on how we do things at UNIVEN

The University of Venda recently took part in a Short Course Review and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework Development workshop hosted by Rhodes University. Representing the institution were Dr Nyadzani Dolphus Nevhudoli from Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation, and Ms Rachel Mathungeni from the Department of Youth in Development, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education. The workshop formed part of the UCDP Collaborative University-led Project on Higher Education Engaged Teaching and Research for Societal Impact, which brings together partners including Mangosuthu University of Technology and Eduvos.

The collaborative week focused on strengthening short course offerings to ensure they are academically sound, socially responsive, and aligned with the principles of engaged scholarship. Participants reviewed existing courses, redesigned them to enhance relevance and transformational learning, and developed coherent MEL frameworks to support accountability, evidence generation, and continuous improvement.

The opening day introduced participants to the UCDP framework, institutional priorities, and the foundations of engaged scholarship. Existing short courses were critically assessed to identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement. On the second day, the focus shifted to the redesign process, with attention given to clarifying learning outcomes, embedding partnership as a training, integrating indigenous and local knowledge

systems, and ensuring responsiveness to community needs. Collaborative sessions enabled teams to refine course content, delivery methods, and assessment strategies to support practice-oriented learning.

Day three explored the role of community participation in sustainable development and responsible natural resource management. The fourth day centred on the development and refinement of MEL frameworks, where participants defined outcomes, indicators, data sources, and feedback mechanisms. Special emphasis was placed on aligning course-level indicators with broader UCDP and institutional MEL systems to strengthen coherence and evidence-based reporting.

The week concluded with the consolidation of redesigned short courses and draft MEL frameworks. Participants reflected on key lessons, shared best practices, and identified potential implementation challenges, along with mitigation strategies to support effective rollout and sustainability.

Reflecting on the experience, Ms Mathungeni emphasised the importance of community-engaged teaching and socially responsive curriculum practices. She noted that integrating community knowledge into curriculum design is essential, and that curriculum transformation goes beyond content changes to rethink how knowledge is produced, taught, and evaluated. She added that transformational learning requires participatory approaches that respond directly to societal needs, with partnerships at the core of engaged scholarship.



Participants co-creating and co-designing the best practices in monitoring and evaluation

The insights gained will support the effective implementation of redesigned short courses and robust monitoring and evaluation systems that enhance institutional and community impact

UNIVEN's participation in the workshop reinforces its commitment to advancing engaged scholarship and strengthening socially responsive teaching practices.



Ms Rachel Mathungeni, Lecturer, Department of Youth in Development

A New Era for Faculty Advisors in Driving Institutional Impact

The University of Venda was proudly represented at the 2026 Enactus South Africa NPC Faculty Advisors' Indaba, which focused on redefining the Faculty Advisor's role in driving venture creation and institutional impact. Mr Rudzani Mamphweli, Community Engagement Officer and Enactus Co-Faculty Advisor in the Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation (CEEIIC), joined Ms Doreen Morukhu, Lecturer and Enactus Co-Faculty Advisor in the Department of Human Resources within the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law (FMCL), to represent the institution.

The Indaba brought together faculty advisors from across the country under a shared vision of using entrepreneurship as a catalyst for positive social and environmental change. As part of the globally connected Enactus network, participants explored the evolving role of faculty advisors, aligned strategies across international, national, and institutional contexts, and reimagined approaches to venture development. Discussions also highlighted strategic resourcing, funding alignment, and



Faculty Advisors from different universities with Enactus national officials

collaborative opportunities to strengthen both the breadth and depth of Enactus programmes, positioning universities to unlock greater impact through innovation and entrepreneurship.

The 2026 Indaba served as an orientation platform for new Faculty Advisors, including Mr. Mamphweli and Ms. Morukhu, introducing them to the core responsibilities of supporting Enactus teams. As Faculty Advisors, they are expected to act as primary mentors and institutional representatives, guiding and overseeing student teams to ensure alignment with Enactus values, educational objectives, and university policies while empowering students to lead. In this context, Mr. Mamphweli and Ms. Morukhu will provide strategic guidance to the UNIVEN Enactus student team, working alongside colleagues in DCEEIIC to help students strengthen their leadership, teamwork, and communication skills.

Both advisors expressed enthusiasm about supporting a dynamic Enactus University of Venda team led by Ms. Dembe Mutshinyalo, President of Enactus UNIVEN, and her executive collective. The team's 2026 focus is on innovation, impact, and institutional transformation, with a strong drive to move beyond theory into practical, scalable solutions that address real community and systems-level challenges in South Africa. As part of this direction, the executive team has launched the Building Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Higher Education Learning Programme, an initiative aimed at cultivating a consistent entrepreneurial culture on campus. Through this programme, Enactus UNIVEN equips students with the skills to think critically, validate markets, and develop investable ventures. Reflecting her approach, Ms. Dembe noted that her leadership is rooted in systems thinking, entrepreneurship, and impact-driven execution.

Reflecting on the Indaba Ms. Morukhu said she felt honoured to join the Enactus community as a Co-Faculty Advisor from

the University of Venda. She described the Indaba as a valuable platform for networking, learning, and collaboration, with a theme centred on redefining the Faculty Advisor role for innovation and institutional impact. She added that she is proud to be part of Enactus's mission to empower students to use entrepreneurial action to transform lives and shape a more sustainable future. According to Ms. Morukhu, the event created meaningful connections with fellow advisors and industry partners, and she looks forward to the positive impact of their collective efforts.



UNIVEN Enactus Co-Faculty Advisors : Mr Rudzani Mamphweli (left) and Ms Doreen Morukhu (right) with Ms Letitia de Wet, CEO and Country Director, Enactus South Africa.

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