



University of Venda  
*Creating Future Leaders*

# UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



Issue 70 | 16 April 2026

## A New Era of Impact: UNIVEN Launches UGO Student Chapter and Fellowship Cohort



The University of Venda (UNIVEN) successfully launched the UNIVEN-UGO Student Chapter and the UGO Fellowship 2026 cohort on Tuesday, 14 April 2026, at the University's Sports Hall. The event, attended by more than 300 students and stakeholders, filled the venue to its capacity and marked a significant milestone in

advancing student leadership, innovation, and community engagement. The purpose of the event was to introduce a dynamic platform that equips students with practical skills, leadership experience, and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to society.

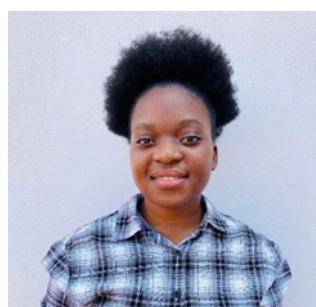
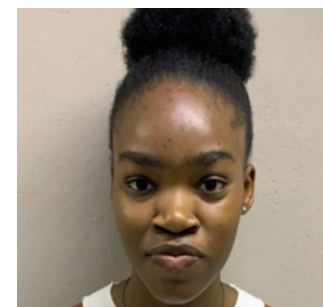


*Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal*

In his address to launch the UNIVEN – UGO Student Chapter and UGO Fellowship 2026 Cohort, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni underscored that the launch of the Universal Greening Organisation (UGO) Student Chapter at the University of Venda is both symbolic and transformative, reflecting the institution’s role as a birthplace of ideas, leadership, and societal change. He highlighted the University’s commitment to producing graduates who are locally relevant and globally competitive, particularly in the context of Africa’s pressing challenges such as climate change, youth unemployment, and inequality. Emphasising the call by President Cyril Ramaphosa for universities to function as engines of development, he described the student chapter as a dynamic platform that moves learning beyond theory into practical, community-driven impact, equipping students with critical leadership and innovation skills. He further noted that such initiatives bridge the gap between the University and society, foster entrepreneurship, and align with continental aspirations, such as the African Union Agenda 2063. He reaffirmed the University’s full support

for the initiative, calling on students to seize this opportunity to lead, innovate, and drive sustainable development across the continent, led by a newly appointed student leadership team comprising President Rivonia Boitumelo Mashatola, Deputy President Theodore Tshivhinda, Secretary General Lusani Phophi, Deputy Secretary General Konanani Rasimphi, Treasurer General Vhulenda Negota, and Project Coordinator Muvhulawa Musutha.

**Below:** Executive Committee of UNIVEN – UGO Student Chapter



**Above:** Executive Committee of UNIVEN – UGO Student Chapter

**Top row:** Deputy President Theodore Tshivhinda and Treasurer General Vhulenda Negota

**Second row:** Projects Co-ordinator Muvhulawa Masutha and Secretary General Lusani Phophi

**Third row:** Deputy Secretary General Konani Rasimphi and President Boitumelo Mashatola

Delivering the opening and welcome remarks, Professor Vhonani Netshandama highlighted the University's strong commitment to developing both current and future leaders. She encouraged students to embrace experiential learning beyond the classroom and actively participate in initiatives that foster innovation, leadership, and community impact.



*Mr Talifhani Tshitwamulomoni, Founder and Executive Chairman of the Universal Greening Organisation*

This was followed by the official launch of the UGO Fellowship 2026 by Mr Talifhani Tshitwamulomoni, Founder and Executive Chairman of the Universal Greening Organisation (UGO). Mr Tshitwamulomoni informed the students that the call for applications for the Fellowship 2026 cohort is open from 14 April 2026 and will close on 14 May 2026. He described the fellowship as a transformative platform that bridges the gap between theory and practice through community engagement, mentorship, and applied research. Reflecting on UGO's origins as a student-led initiative, he highlighted its growth into a globally recognised organisation and encouraged students to seize the opportunity to become change-makers capable of driving both local and international impact.

Messages of support from key stakeholders

underscored the initiative's significance in advancing youth empowerment, skills development, and environmental sustainability. These included representatives from Thulamela Local Municipality, led by Mayor Cllr Sarah Rambuda; the UNIVEN Convocation Executive Committee, represented by Shonisani Masutha; and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), represented by Mr Mahlodi Tau, Chief Director for Biodiversity Information and Policy Advice.

Speakers commended the strong collaboration among UNIVEN, UGO, and their partners, highlighting the importance of creating opportunities that bridge education with real-world challenges and encourage students to play an active role in their communities.



*Theodore Tshivhinda, UNIVEN-UGO Student Chapter Deputy President*

Representing the UNIVEN-UGO Student Chapter, the Deputy President, Theodore Tshivhinda, described the chapter as a critical bridge between students and industry, providing opportunities for skills development, leadership exposure, and environmental stewardship. Students were encouraged to join the initiative and take part in programmes that prepare them to be globally competitive and socially responsible graduates.

In his remarks, Thovhele Kenedy Tshivhase emphasised that the launch symbolises a bold commitment to shaping the future through youth leadership and action. He urged students to take initiative, embrace responsibility, and become agents of change, highlighting the importance of collaboration in producing graduates who are impactful and solution-driven.

Closing the programme, Professor Eric Maluta, expressed appreciation to all stakeholders for their contributions to the successful event.

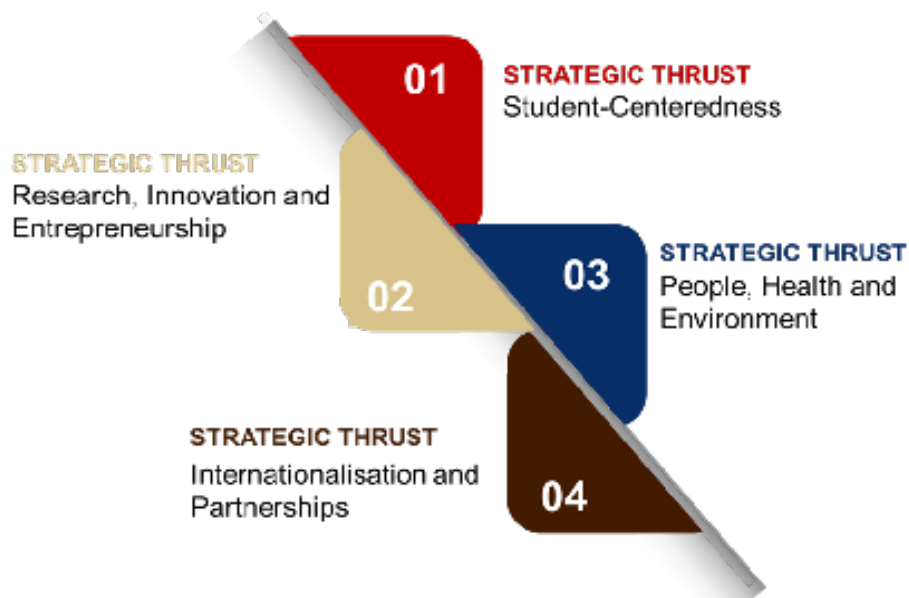
He encouraged students to take full advantage of fellowship opportunities, utilise the resources available through the student chapter, and actively engage in the programme to unlock their potential.

The launch of the UNIVEN-UGO Student Chapter marks a significant step towards empowering students to lead, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development, reinforcing the University of Venda's role in shaping future leaders.



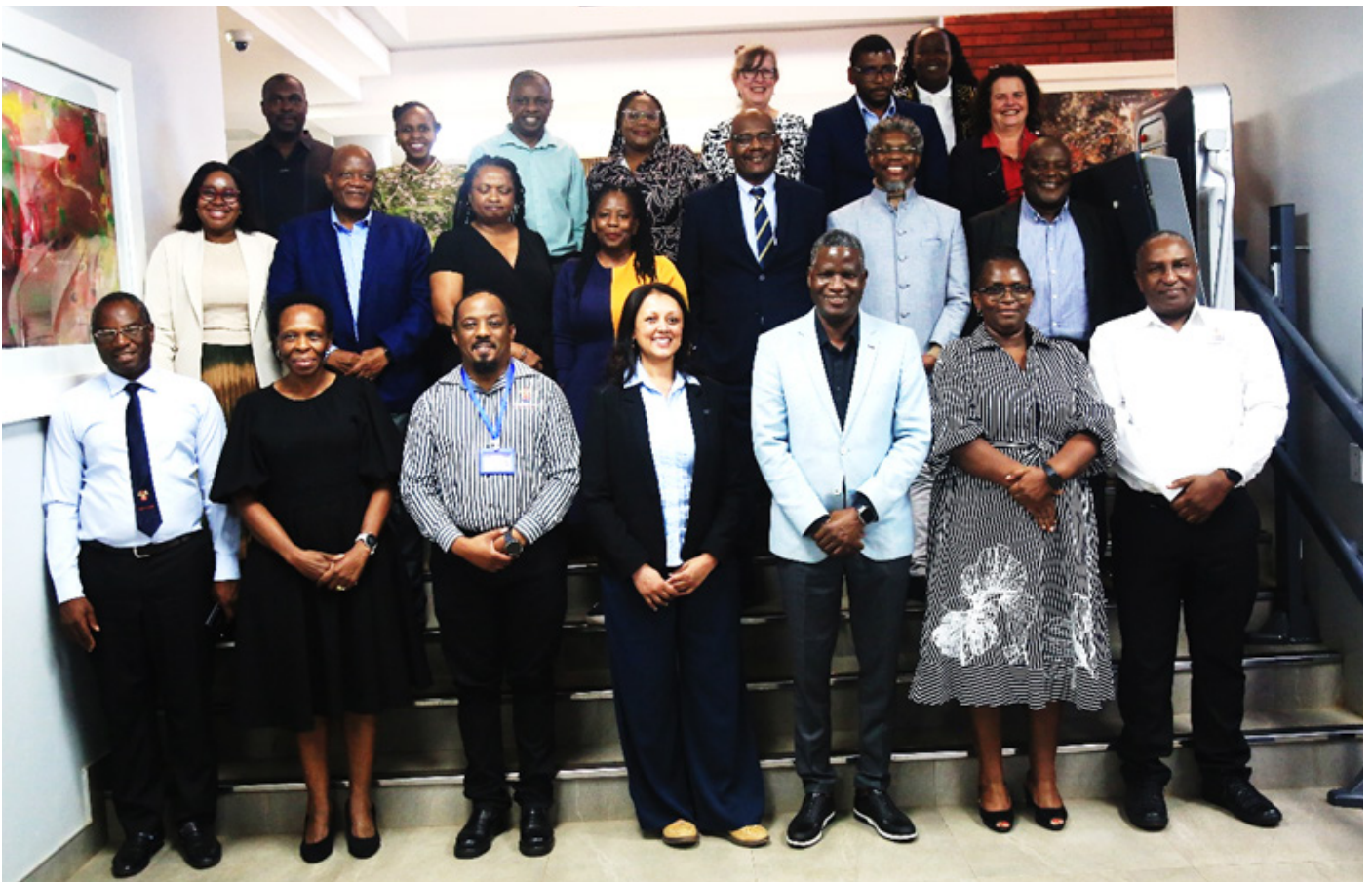
*Dignitaries*

## Did you know that the UNIVEN Strategic Plan 2026-2030 has four Strategic Thrusts listed below?





*Group photo of panel members following the proceedings of the 2025 Executive and Senior Management Performance Evaluation*



*In the picture: Members of EMC, SMC and external stakeholders engage in a Culture Survey Feedback Workshop, reflecting on insights and shaping a stronger organisational culture*



University of Venda  
Creating Future Leaders

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**UNIVEN CONVOCATION**  
THE PRESIDENT OF CONVOCATION  
MR SYLVESTER MOTADI, INVITES YOU TO

2026

**UNIVEN  
ALUMNI  
EXCELLENCE**

*Awards*



**Venue:** Hotel Sky,  
Sandton, Johannesburg



**Time:** 18:00



SCAN QR OR CLICK BELOW TO RSVP

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