

Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA



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Creating future leaders

UNIVEN hosts the 28th Congress of the South African Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (SASBMB) for the first time



On the left photo: Members of the SASBMB council, congress local organising committee and the University of Venda, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Bernard Nthambeleni.

On Sunday, 07 July 2024, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni officially opened the 28th congress of the South African Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (SASBMB). The four-day congress took place from 07-10 July 2024 at the Protea Ranch Hotel in Polokwane. The milestone congress was hosted under the theme 'Biochemistry Leading the Future.' This was a fitting theme given the important role that the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology play in addressing both current and emerging biomedical challenges.

The theme of the congress resonates with the motto of UNIVEN, 'Creating Future Leaders,' confirming the commitment of both UNIVEN and the SASBMB in building the capacity of the country to address future challenges. The congress was the most attended in the history of the society and this success highlighted UNIVEN's preparedness to lead from the front in advancing one of its key strategic thrusts – engaged scholarship.

This year's congress featured several plenary presentations and parallel sessions focussing on a broad range of sub-topics such as drug discovery, infectious and parasitic diseases, phytomedicine, non-communicable diseases, protein biochemistry, computational and structural biology. The congress served as a platform for sharing research advances in the fields of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. The participation of postgraduate students, who constitute the majority of the delegates, is an important component of the congress.

Human capacity building is central to the objectives of the SASBMB. To this end, several awards were given to postgraduate students who excelled in the poster and oral presentations. The awards serve as motivation to the future scientists.

When officially opening the congress, Prof Nthambeleni, expressed his appreciation to the esteemed invited international and local guest speakers, scholars, postgraduate students and professionals who were gathered at the congress. He said UNIVEN is honoured to be hosting the prestigious, important scientific congress of this magnitude.



UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, officially opening the congress

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Group photo of the audience attending the opening session

Prof Nthambeleni gave the background of UNIVEN and Limpopo Province which he described as the fruit and breadbasket of South Africa, producing up to 60% of the country's fresh produce and grains. In addition, he said Limpopo Province is the country's leading tourist destination due to its rich biodiversity and wildlife.

When speaking about the history of UNIVEN, he pointed out one of the University's 5-year Strategic Thrusts; Engaged Scholarship, and he emphasised that the congress is aligned to this strategic thrust.

He continued to share the University's rankings and mentioned that, in 2022, UNIVEN was ranked number 15 by Times Higher Education and in 2023, the Times Higher Education, Sub-Saharan Africa report ranked the University 11th position out of 88 universities in Sub-Saharan African region.

While it was ranked number four in South Africa and on the African continent amongst universities that are younger than 50 years worldwide according to the latest Times Higher Education Young University Rankings. In the same rankings report, UNIVEN has also improved its global/world ranking and is now in the top 300 universities in 2024 moving from the top 400 universities in 2023.

Prof Nthambeleni further said, "By hosting this year's South African Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology congress, we seek to further consolidate both our research and engaged scholarship agenda in our quest to improve our academic and research endeavours."

He alluded to the importance of innovation in the fields of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology which was most clearly demonstrated during the recent Covid-19 pandemic that relied on vaccine and drug design efforts to sustainably contain it, emphasising that there is no doubt that the fields of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology will continue to contribute towards addressing current and emerging global challenges.

Over 400 participants from local, regional, national and international institutions attended the conference, which was mainly dominated by postgraduate students. Notably, an estimated 60% of the postgraduate students were female. This highlights the commitment of the SASBMB to address the current imbalance in gender within this sector that is currently dominated by male scientists.

Several international guests offered and shared their research ideas with the delegates towards finding solutions to our social and public health sector problems. The congress was ushered by seven international speakers and eight local speakers. Notable invited guest speakers present included Prof. Kiaran Kirk (from The Australia

lian National University); Prof. Greg Blatch (from Notre Dame University, Australia); Prof. Matthias P. Mayer (from Heidelberg University, Germany) and Prof. Liesl Zühlke (Vice President - Extramural Research and Internal Portfolio of the South African Medical Research Council).

As planned, this congress had over four plenary sessions and seven parallel sessions with 21 breakaway sessions.

The congress registered several exhibitors who comprised of private sector companies, NGOs, researchers as well as science and technology institutions.



The co-chair of the local organising committee, Professor Addmore Shonhai of the University of Venda's Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, said in his talk that the platform was mainly for postgraduate students to showcase their research, and in the process, they could also be able to network with other researchers, and indeed to convey notes about their experience in the lab as researchers, with the rest of the researchers that came to the meeting as well. He emphasised the pivotal roles of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology foreign fighting current and emerging challenges that the country and Africa in general face.

"We think Biochemistry and Molecular Biology is part of the toolbox that we need to address challenges, especially infectious diseases and various other aspects that we face," Prof. Shonhai pointed out. Prof. Shonhai reported that generally nearly all the universities from the country that offer aspects of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology were represented at the congress. In addition, he mentioned that this conference, without doubt, would benefit the tourism sector in Limpopo province.

"We are all booked at the hotels. Sponsors and exhibitors who were in attendance had the opportunity to meet with the scientists to market their products". He reiterated that the conference also would benefit other sectors that are indirectly connected to tourism, and this would be far-reaching in terms of its impact. Prof. Shonhai also stated that the congress was a great place to network. The students presented their work orally and through poster presentations, and that way, they might be able to attract potential em-

ployers, and potential future supervisors. Indeed, this was a great opportunity for students and even for researchers, senior researchers alike, because scientists thrive on the exchange of ideas.



As co-chair of the local organising committee of this congress, Prof. Edwin Madala expressed that they were satisfied with all the arrangements. He mentioned that they have recorded the highest number of participants possibly because of the fact that this was the first conference held post- COVID-19. He pointed out that organising the congress was challenging because of the high delegate turn-out as well as the logistical demands involved in coordinating international participants.

Prof. Madala indicated that they were motivated to organise the congress to showcase the UNIVEN brand. In addition, he emphasised that the congress served as a platform for their department to benchmark their work with that of the rest of the country. This is because in his opinion, the UNIVEN Biochemistry and Microbiology is emerging as one of the best in the country. "In 2018, the University did not have any research in mass spectrometry. We adopted research in mass spectrometry using the instruments that we bought from Japan. And I can tell you that we are on the top three best universities in the country now in mass spectrometry. With this conference, we are trying to showcase that we are not as small as people think. We might be hidden in the deep ends of Limpopo, but just give us time with this. In the next ten years, we intend to place the University of Venda at the apex in the fields of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology research.

In addition, we continue to deliver quality services within the basic teaching of the subject at undergraduate levels. I am glad that we are moving into the space. The UNIVEN brand is growing tremendously. The University just turned 40 years in 2022.

This congress will put us on the world map because next time, when the delegates, speak about the University of Venda, they will certainly remember this congress as one of the best congresses ever attended and that will always be associated with the brand UNIVEN", these were the words by Prof. Madala when highlighting about the congress. He maintained that this congress is going to serve as a pedestal in their quest to become the best Biochemistry and Microbiology department in the country.



“Drive for Dreams: Join Us on the Greens to Make Education Possible for All!”



On photo: Vice Chancellor playing golf

The 2024 UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor Winter Golf Tournament teed off under a cold weather, aiming not just for birdies, but for a more noble cause. Each swing was a step towards raising funds for students facing financial difficulties in paying their university fees. The sun set on a day filled with laughter and generosity, embodying the spirit of community and solidarity. As the final putt dropped, the tournament succeeded not just in showcasing skills on the greens, but in paving the way for brighter futures for those in need.

The Vice-Chancellor's prestigious golf tournament, which was played in Four Ball Alliance format, took place on Friday, 12 July 2024 at the Polokwane Golf Club. This is the 3rd year the University is hosting this great initiative and is a worthy cause to be supported.

During the Prize giving ceremony, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni recognised the sponsors and players for their wonderful support since the tournament started. He also told them that their participation in this Golf tournament is a worthy cause. He indicated that each year there is a huge improvement in terms of the turnout and the amount of funds raised.

Prof Nthambeleni further expressed gratitude to all the players and sponsors, because without them, this event would not have been successful.

Prof Nthambeleni stated that “You are participating in a worthy cause that changes the lives of students. You are not only changing their lives but also making impact in our country.” He said UNIVEN has taken a decision not to turn back a deserving student because of lack of funds for their studies. Instead, as a University, “we told ourselves that we will help these students to raise funds towards their studies. We seek funding to support these deserving students.” He assured sponsors that the donated money will go to the cause for which it was donated.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal remarked that “there is no better way, to change the people's

lives, than empowering them with education. it is only through education that we can change our future. He thanked the organising committee team for making this event a memorable one.

Players of all skill levels participated, from seasoned pros to first-time golfers, united in their shared goal of making a difference in the lives of students. The tournament was not just about competition, but about coming together as a community to support those in need.

As the sun began to dip below the horizon, casting a golden hue over the course, the final scores were tallied, and the winners announced. But beyond the winners and losers, the true victory was in the generosity and compassion shown by all who participated. The funds raised would make a meaningful impact on the lives of students struggling to fulfil their academic dreams, ensuring that no one would be left behind.



On photo: The Captain of the Tournament, Mr Razwinane announcing the winners

88 players participated in this 2024 UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor Winter Golf Tournament. The winners were announced during the Prize giving ceremony. The winners were arranged as follows: Longest 2 ladies won by Shertina Maremane; Longest drive 2 men went to Mpho Makhado. Nearest pin 4 won by Peter Masehela, Nearest pin 8 by Mpho Matsi, Nearest pin 11 won by Neville Mawaha and Nearest pin 16 won by Leo Gama.



On photo: Number one team of the tournament pose for a photo with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (middle)

Winners of the tournament who took position one during the 2024 UNIVEN Vice Chancellor Winter Golf tournament was the four ball team comprising of Richard Pila, Pakati Selatjie, Phill Mashakane, Meriam Malebo with 108 points; followed by the team of Sarel Nong, Tapiwa Comwe, Atang Malatjie and Hulisani Dabishi who took position number two with 98 points.

Position three went to the team of Leo Gama, Joe Legora and Baldwin Ramasobane with 93 points.

The team of Shertina Maremane, Jonas Tshikundamalema, Rali Razwinane and Regionald Tshikota got position four with 91 points; Position five with 90 points won by the team of Sakia Makhafole, Pascal Saanago, Rudzani and Nzumbu. Lastly, the team of Mpho Matsi, Musa Ngobeni, Makhafole and Mphephu got position 6 with 88 points.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal when congratulating the Golfers on their impressive tournament said “your commitment and dedication have truly paid off. Keep up the great work.”

The prizes were sponsored by Nedbank. UNIVEN Management expresses gratitude to Nedbank for this generous support. This year's Tournament was blessed by the presence of the following Chief Executive Officers:

Mr Thakhani Makhuvha, Group CEO of Limpopo Economic Development Agency, Mr Selvan Govender, CEO of PURCO, Mr Moses Ngobeni, Limpopo Tourism Agency, Dr Nndweleni Mphephu, Chairperson of Lepelle Northern Water Board, Ms Shertina Maremane, Landbank Provincial Head and Dr John Mudau, CEO of UIGC.

The CEO of UIGC, Dr John Mudau (on the bottom photo), announced the sponsors who were in four categories. The Gold sponsorship by ABSA Bank, followed by Standard Bank. PURCO and RICO were in the silver sponsorship, respectively. Standard sponsors were the following companies: UIGC; West Gate Residence, Masana Lodge; The Creative Axis Architects; Point Services; Star B Plastics; Joshua Maroge Quantity Surveyors;



“Drive for Dreams: Join Us on the Greens to Make Education Possible for All!”



Ninety-One SA and The Ranch Resort, Moko-pane.

The last category, Four Ball, were the following companies and individuals: Argon Assets Management; Lifestyle Apartment Residence; Marara Risk Solutions, Porchevilla Hotel; Johannes NEST Residence; Nyeleti Administration Trust; SANLAM, Lepelle Northern Water; Dabishi Nthambeleni; Dr Terry Ramabulana and Ms Salome Makgoka, UNIVEN Convocation EXCO Member.

ABSA Regional Segment Head, Mr Stanley Godi (on the photo above), representing sponsors thanked the University for organising this golf day. He mentioned that “the University is serious about getting engaged scholarship right. We want to help those students to complete their studies. We feel that by doing so we get in touch with communities and make impact,” highlighted Mr Godi.

He expressed gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor and his organising team for hosting a memorable tournament.

In the previous two years, the University held successful golf tournaments as part of the University’s initiatives to raise funds in support of the missing middle students. UNIVEN calls on various stakeholders to support the institution in its endeavour to create future leaders. The golf tournament is also a proud occasion for everyone connected to this institution to give back and contribute to the advancement and sustainability of this University.

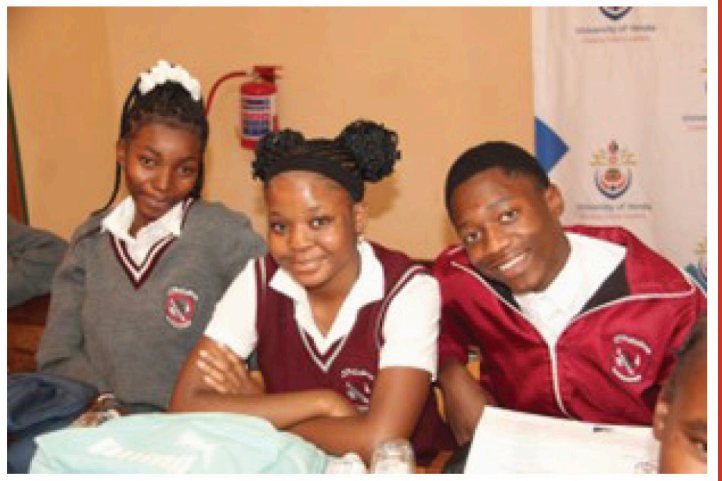
In closing, the Director Revenue and Financial Aid, Ms Tshildzi Ramulondi (on the photo above)



said because she works with students, she knows the challenges that students are confronted with in terms of funding. “There are students who experience serious financial challenges, and we need to give them the necessary support. This tournament is really making an impact. There are more than 2000 students, including the missing middle, who are not funded, and they need assistance,” explained Ms Ramulondi.



UNIVEN lends a helping hand to Marude Secondary School



Left photo: Principal of Marude Secondary School (middle) flanked by Professors Bessong and Runhare. Right photo: Learners of Marude Secondary School

On Thursday, 18 July 2024, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) joined millions of people around the world in commemorating Nelson Mandela International Day. In keeping with the spirit of giving back, as part of Nelson Mandela International Day celebration, the University chose to dedicate 67 minutes of service to the community by adopting Marude Secondary School in Thohoyandou. The adoption of Marude Secondary School by UNIVEN was a strategic decision, as the school's performance in the previous years' examinations was below the provincial average.

Speaking during the event, the University's Advancement Unit Manager, Mr Percy Ngobeli highlighted that the UNIVEN management hopes to address the academic challenges faced by Marude Secondary School by initiating a strategic intervention. "With this initiative, the University's lecturers will provide valuable academic support to the learners of Marude across all subjects offered at the school, helping them to improve their performance and achieve greater success" highlighted Ngobeli.

Ngobeli further indicated that "this effort is aligned with the University's mission to "Create Future Leaders" and reaffirms UNIVEN's commitment to creating positive change in the community."



On photo: Prof Tawanda Runhare

Prof Tawanda Runhare, Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education, shared a message of support during the Nelson Mandela International Day celebration at Marude Secondary School. He noted that this day, while celebrated in South Africa, is an international day that transcends borders and celebrates the global impact of Nelson Mandela's legacy.

When delivering his message, Prof Runhare also drew attention to the words of UN Secretary Gen-

eral, Antonio Guterres, sharing key quotes from his speech. When paraphrasing Guterres remarks, Prof Runhare remarked that "Nelson Mandela showed the world how one person can make a difference." He also shared the Secretary General's belief that "Each of us has the power to change the world, and on this day, we pledge to do our part to contribute to peace, reconciliation, and understanding across the globe."

These poignant words served as a reminder of the positive impact that each person can have in creating a better future, aligning with UNIVEN's mission of "Creating Future Leaders."

Prof Pascal Bessong, the Research Professor in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture at the University of Venda representing the UNIVEN Management, recognised Mandela as the only public figure or the one only that has an International Day, out of the seven billion world population. Prof Bessong continued to engage with the learners of Marude Secondary School, delivering a powerful message on the importance of self-leadership. He encouraged learners to take responsibility for their own learning, likening their studies to "going to work."

Prof Bessong also emphasised the need for passion, discipline, and conscientiousness, stating that these qualities are essential for becoming effective leaders. He asked the learners, "Who are you?," emphasising that their personal dispositions will determine whether they take advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the University of Venda. He added, "If a material is not well disposed, the material will be wasted," urging the learners to reflect on their own ambitions and strive for higher goals.



On photo: Mr Alex Muthelo

The Principal of Marude Secondary School, Mr Alex Muthelo, took the opportunity to express his

gratitude for UNIVEN's support, remarking that the University's involvement was a "blessing in disguise." He highlighted that the University's commitment to turning Marude Secondary School into a model school would indeed transform the educational experience for learners and staff alike.

"We are in a partnership with UNIVEN, he stated, and we have 17 students currently doing practical who are from UNIVEN. We know that by the end of the year, the results will improve significantly."

Thompho Tshivuyahuvhi, the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) President of Marude Secondary School said "this initiative that UNIVEN is doing will help improve our results by the end of the year, and we are really looking forward to it. We are excited to receive assistance from the University staff, as this will give us the chance to work with experts in our subject areas and get the support, we need to do well."

The UNIVEN's Nelson Mandela International Day celebrations also saw staff members from the University's Experimental Farm lending their green thumbs to Marude Secondary School. In just 67 minutes, the staff members planted a sustainable garden on the school's grounds, fostering a spirit of environmentalism and self-sufficiency that will no doubt benefit the school for years to come.



Experiential Farm staff planting trees



Some of the UNIVEN staff who attended the event

Celebrating Excellence: Dr Thendo Gertie Makhado Named One of Mail and Guardian's 200 Young South Africans 2024



Dr Thendo Gertie Makhado, a junior lecturer at the University of Venda's Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Advanced Nursing Science, has been honoured as one of the Mail and Guardian's 200 Young South Africans for 2024.

This recognition highlights the exceptional contributions of young South Africans aged 18-35. This year, over 4,000 nominations were received, and only 200 individuals were selected as finalists, making Dr Makhado's inclusion a testament to her outstanding impact in the field of health and wellness.

The event took place on Thursday, 27 June 2024 at The Forum, The Campus Wanderers Sandton. Dr Makhado is the first in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Venda to receive this award. In her twenties, she made significant strides in nursing education and healthcare research. Her primary role involves guiding nursing students in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Through her dynamic lectures and hands-on support in clinical settings,

Dr Makhado ensures her students develop into competent professional nurses.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Dr Makhado is actively involved in community work and research. Her research addresses critical health issues, such as epilepsy, with the goal of enhancing healthcare education and reducing the stigma associated with neurological conditions. She is dedicated to improving the quality of nursing education and advancing healthcare in South Africa.

Dr Makhado is also engaged in various initiatives aimed at improving healthcare outcomes. These projects empower and educate parents of children with special needs, promote inclusivity, and help children with learning disabilities achieve independence. Her commitment to these causes demonstrates her dedication to making a difference in her community. Reflecting on her journey,

Dr Makhado emphasises the importance of the support she has received. She credits her success to her husband, Prof Lufuno Makhado, who is also her mentor.

She also expresses gratitude to her academic role model, Prof. NV Sepeng from the University of Pretoria, who nominated her for this accolade, as well as other mentors, including Prof. Rechael Lebese, Prof. Mashudu Davhana-Maselesele, and Prof. Nosisi Feza. Additionally, she is thankful for the unwavering support of the clinical team in the Department of Advanced Nursing Science, affectionately known as 'The A Team.'

Dr Makhado's recognition by Mail and Guardian as one of the top young women in academia underscores her remarkable contributions and the profound impact she has had on her students and community. Her words of encouragement to other young people in South Africa resonate with her belief in the power of mutual growth: "We grow by growing others."

Dr Thendo Gertie Makhado stands as an inspiring example of excellence and dedication, and her achievements offer a powerful message of hope and encouragement to young people across the nation.

On behalf of the team at UNIVEN, the Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni extended warmest congratulations to Dr Makhado for being recognised as one of the 200 Young South Africans. "Your dedication, passion, and hard work have not gone unnoticed, and your achievements are truly inspiring. Your contribution to society is invaluable, and we are proud to have you as part of this prestigious list. Keep shining brightly and continue to make a positive impact on the world. Once again, congratulations on this well-deserved honour!"

Tip Offs

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus

Contact the University Hotline

Toll free number 0800 212 755
or email: univenhotline@tip-offs.com

Improper conduct includes the following:

1. Financial misconduct,
2. Misuse or misappropriation of University assets,
3. Health and safety risks,
4. Plagiarism,
5. Fraud and corruption.

Celebrating Youth Month in style: Dr Selahle recognised amongst Mail and Guardian's 200 Young South Africans 2024

Dr Shirley Kholofelo Selahle is a lecturer in the Chemistry department of the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture. She is currently responsible for lecturing analytical chemistry modules at the undergraduate level and supervising research students at the post-graduate level.

In the 2024 edition of the Mail and Guardian's 200 Young South Africans, Dr. Selahle was recognised and honoured as one of the recipients in the education category. This recognition serves to acknowledge the outstanding contribution that she has already made in the education sector in South Africa. This year's awards edition took place in the evening of Thursday, 27 June 2024 at The Forum, The Campus Wanderers Sandton.

The awards are made in various fields such as agriculture, arts and entertainment, business, civil society, climate change and environment, education, energy, entrepreneurship, film and media, financial services, governance, health and wellness, legal services, mining and manufacturing, sport, technology, and innovation as well as tourism and hospitality. The year 2024 saw the Mail and Guardian receiving 4000 nominations, each possessing the highest level of quality with respect to their field of expertise. Mail and Guardian editor-in-chief Luke Feltham said, "Whittling the names down to 200 is not easy, but it is fulfilling work, and our inspiration is drawn far beyond just those who made the final cut".

Dr Selahle's unwavering dedication to her research is evident in her focus on the treatment of water. Her work includes the design of nanostructured material for microextraction by packed sorbent combined with chromatographic techniques for analysis of emerging pollutants in water, among many other projects. She is currently involved in a water project in the Eastern Cape, where she is assessing and monitoring the type of pollutants found in rivers, dams, boreholes, and springs. Additionally, she is working on a water project at the University of Venda, detecting and monitoring pollutants in Thohoyandou water bodies and developing effective analytical methods for their extraction. She is currently supervising two honours students and three masters students in research projects related to water treatment.

Her work is not only limited to teaching and research because she is also involved in departmental administration through her service in various departmental committees such as the Departmental Teaching and Learning Committee (DTLC), Departmental Higher Degrees Committee (DHDC), and Departmental Instrumentation Committee (DIC). Through DTLC, she is able to ensure that first year students do well in their chemistry modules while she is exposed to research matters through DHDC and DIC.

Dr Selahle is also actively involved in community engagement work where some of her outstanding contributions have been observed during projects such as Eskom expos where she acts as a facilitator for high school science students. One of the achievements of which Shirley is most proud is getting her doctorate in chemistry at the University of Johannesburg, despite having had difficulties with paying the fees. "During my PhD journey, I learned that dedication and determination really pay. What is needed is to focus on the targeted goal without allowing any external factors to disrupt you," she says. She has also acknowledged and thanked her mentor, Prof Philiswa Nomngongo from the University of Johannesburg, who has been instrumental in her academic career.



Dr Shirley Kholofelo Selahle, lecturer in the Chemistry department of the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture

In congratulating Dr Selahle, the University Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni said "I am beyond proud to congratulate you on being recognised as one of the Mail and Guardian's 200 Young South Africans in 2024. Your dedication and passion have not gone unnoticed, and this prestigious honour is a testament to your hard work and commitment. Your innovative thinking exemplifies the values we cherish at our University. Thank you for representing us so admirably.

Your achievements inspire us all to aim higher and reach for excellence. Keep shining bright!".

A Renowned Civil Engineering Professor from South Wales University delivered a Public Lecture to Staff and Postgraduate students

The Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture under the leadership of Prof Natasha Potgieter recently hosted Prof John Kinuthia who is the renowned Professor of Innovation and Engagement in Civil Engineering and the Head of Advancement Materials Testing Center at the School of Engineering in South Wales University, United Kingdom (UK). Prof Kinuthia's visit was jointly organised by Dr Sphiwe Emmanuel Mhlongo (Head of the Department of Earth Sciences), Dr Rabelani Mudzielwana (Senior Lecturer Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences), and Prof Lutendo Murulana (Deputy Dean Research and Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture). Both involved departments conduct research on the characterisation of earth materials (including mine waste material) for their suitability for utilisation in the construction industry. This made Prof Kinuthia the best candidate to deliver a public lecture on the sustainable development of construction materials and civil infrastructure.

The public lecture took place at the University of Venda (Agric-Two Flat Lecture Theatre Hall). Prof Lutendo Murulana officially opened the event and welcomed Prof Kinuthia at the University of Venda.

During the welcome, he highlighted that the visit contributes significantly to the University's strategic objective of strengthening the University of Venda's local, regional, and international profile and visibility. He further extended an invitation to Prof Kinuthia to become a visiting professor and consider participating in the co-supervision of postgraduate students within the faculty.

Prof Kinuthia's presentation focused on Approaches to Sustainable Development of Infrastructure. At the beginning of his talk, Prof Kinuthia highlighted the challenges associated with using Portland cement in the construction industry. He cited the high carbon dioxide emission from Portland cement production as the main factor contributing to the environmental unfriendliness of this type of cement. He indicated that this has necessitated research that looks at the possible use of locally available materials such as clays, waste from industries, and agriculture in the construction sector to find a replacement for Portland cement.

In his presentation, he used case studies of the work he carried out in different African countries and from his laboratory to demonstrate how building materials can be sourced and produced from locally available materials.

In conclusion, he encouraged the audience to prioritise conducting research that have a positive impact on the communities. In this case, he emphasised the fact that the University of Venda is strategically placed for this as it is surrounded by rural communities that need massive transformation through action-orientated research. He further highlighted the need for multi-disciplinary research, encouraging departments and the university at large to collaborate with communities and relevant government bodies for impactful research.

Dr Mhlongo gave closing remarks. He highlighted some areas of potential

collaboration and outlined the challenges that the Department of Earth Sciences, as well as the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences, have been facing in their research groups regarding the successful development of materials for sustainable use. He indicated that both departments could benefit greatly from the collaboration with an experienced researcher like Prof Kinuthia. Dr Mhlongo further acknowledged the large audience of staff and students from the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture for participating in the lecture by Prof Kinuthia.



On photo: Prof Lutendo Murulana



On photo: Prof John Kinuthia



A Physics Masters student jets to Anton Pannekoek Institute for Astronomy, University of Amsterdam to participate at an ASPIRE Summer Research Training



Ms Vhuthu Miranda Tshilengo from the Department of Physics, Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture has been invited to participate as an ASPIRE Summer Research Training Student, staying in Amsterdam for six weeks from June 28,

2024, to August 9, 2024, at the Anton Pannekoek Institute for Astronomy, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The ASPIRE (Astrophysics Summer Programme for International Research Experience) in Amsterdam offers individual research projects to a highly selective group of students, supervised by the staff. This six-week on-site programme in Amsterdam is designed for highly motivated students to engage in cutting-edge astronomy research at the Anton Pannekoek Institute (API), University of Amsterdam. The programme aims to provide students with hands-on astronomical research experience at a world-class institute and assist them in launching their careers in science and other fields. Participants will learn new research skills and receive guidance and mentorship from an assigned advisor.

Ms Vhuthu is a young woman from Tshilamba, Mutale, near Thohoyandou who completed her Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Physics from the University of Venda in 2020, followed by an Honours degree in Physics in 2021. She began her Master of Science in Physics at the University of Venda in 2022, focusing on Radio Astronomy, and is currently in the final year of her Master's program, completing her project. Her Master research project utilises existing MeerKAT data from the MHONGOOSE large survey project, which is stored

on the Inter-University Institute for Data-Intensive Astronomy's (IDIA) federated research cloud. She conducts commensal searches for radio transients and variables under the supervision of Prof. Patrick Woudt from the University of Cape Town and Prof. Eric Maluta from the University of Venda. These commensal transient surveys with radio imaging require substantial computing power, data storage, and time. They are crucial for astronomers to gain new insights into time-domain radio astronomy, particularly in discovering faint radio transients and variables.



Upcoming Events



INVITATION TO ATTEND

Convocation Fundraising Gala Dinner

AUGUST

FRIDAY 23rd 2024 5 PM for 6 PM

Protea Hotel Fire & Ice, 221 Garsfontein Road, Menlyn, Pretoria

Dress Code : Black Tie

SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES

Platinum Package : R150 000 (Two ten-seater tables & five other benefits)
 Gold Package : R100 000 (Two ten-seater tables & four other benefits)
 Silver : R50 000 (Two ten-seater tables & three other benefits)
 Package for chairs : R2 500 (For each chair & one other benefit)

To sponsor, you may deposit funds into the University of Venda ABSA Account Number : 1000 000 538 with Ref. Convocationgala2024 or click here to donate <https://univen.devman.co.za/Devman/event/payment/>

Send proof of payment to Mr Mashudu Ramaleba at mashudu.ramaleba@univen.ac.za who is contactable at 071 682 3422.

UNIVEN VICE-CHANCELLOR'S SUMMER GOLF TOURNAMENT



BLUE VALLEY GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB, MIDRAND



15TH NOVEMBER 2024

Format: 4 Ball Alliance

ENTRY FEE: R6,500

- Inclusive of Green fee,
- Golf Cart, Golf Shirt, Cap
- Halfway light meal and Prize Giving Dinner)

Payment: 1st November 2024

Golf Registration 8h00 to 9h30
 Tee-off 10:00

The Funds can be deposited into the University of Venda ABSA Account.

Acc. Name: University of Venda
 Acc. Number: 1000 000 538
 Branch Name: Thohoyandou
 Branch Code: 334149
 Ref. Number: GOLF DAY 2024

For RSVP contact:

Mrs TR Muthadzwi

T: 015 962 8823 | M: 072 168 7368 tshililo.muthadzwi@univen.ac.za

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture staff and postgraduate students benefit from the Public Lecture on the Internet of Things



Group picture taken after the public lecture

The Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture hosted a public lecture on the Internet of Things (IoT) as a tool to promote community. The lecture was delivered by Dr Laimonas Kairiukštis of the Faculty of Technology, Kaunas College HEI (Lithuania in Europe) in the event held recently at the University of Venda (Agric-Two Flat Lecture Theatre Hall).



In an event that was attended by members of staff and postgraduate students from the different departments in the faculty and Heads of Departments, was officially opened by Prof Lutendo Murulana (Deputy Dean Research and Postgraduate Studies of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture).

When introducing Dr Laimonas Kairiukštis, Prof Murulana emphasised the fact that the University of Venda (especially the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture) is committed in establishing a long-term collaboration with him and his institution. He encouraged him to consider visiting the University of Venda more often as there are many opportunities for collaboration that can be explored by both parties.

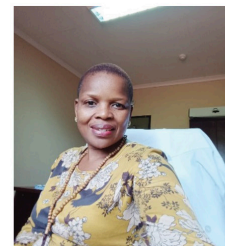
Dr. Laimonas, through the lecture entitled "IoT as a tool to promote community" introduced to the audience the key concepts of digital metrology and the available standards for effective calibration of instruments for improved accuracy of measurements. In his presentation, Dr. Laimonas used practical examples across the different disciplines (including natural, engineering, and health sciences) to demonstrate the need for accurate measurements and effective calibration of instruments. He emphasised the importance of increasing the density of measuring instruments or points in increasing the accuracy of measurement. He identified the approach of

mounting sensors that can calibrate one another on motor vehicles as one practical way of increasing the density of measuring devices and shortening the calibration time for the instruments.

The general take-home message of Dr Laimonas's lecture was tailored around the phrase "Let us be accurate and precise." Expressing vote of thanks, Prof Murulana thanked everyone for attending and commended Dr. Laimonas for delivering such an informative lecture. He also reminded the audience that being accurate and precise is an important trait for every successful scientist and that Dr Laimonas's lecture stressed this message very well.

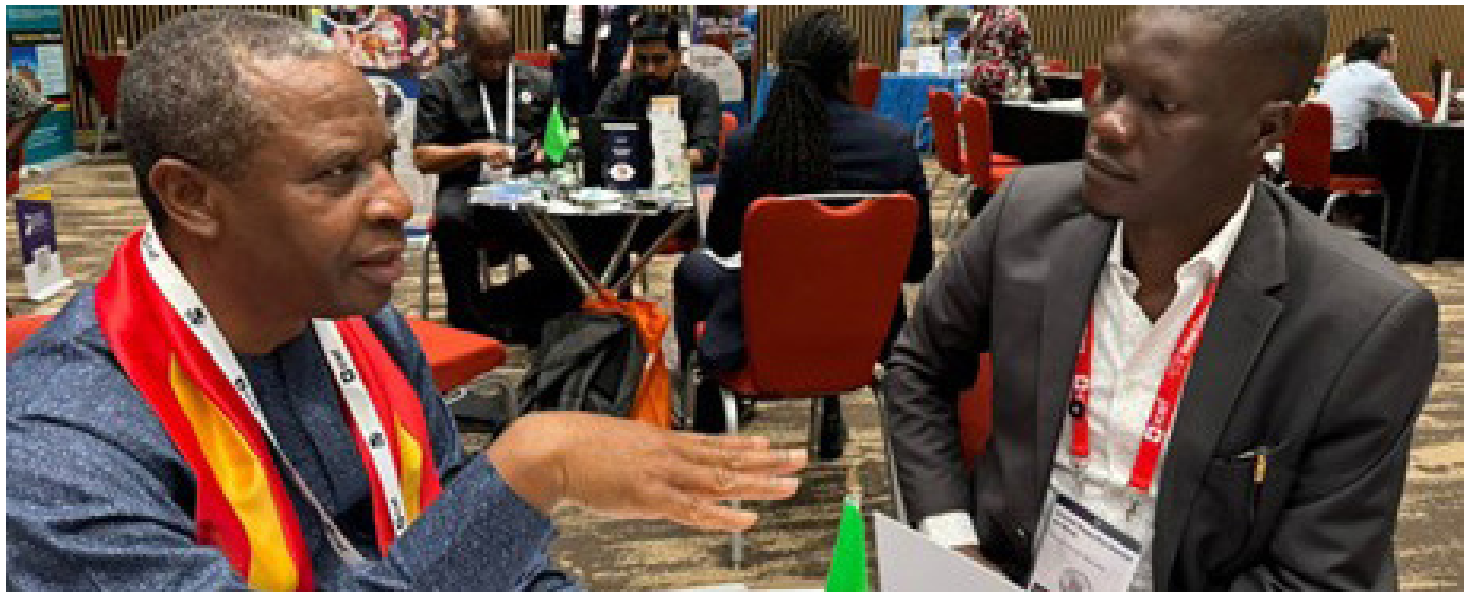


Dr Laimonas Kairiukštis (Professor of Electric Circuits at Kaunas College HEI, Faculty of Technology)



L-R: Dr. Florence Murungweni (Head: Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences), Dr Shonisani E Ramashia (Head: Department of Food Science and Technology), and Dr Sphiwe E Mhlongo (Head: Department of Earth Sciences)

University of Venda shines at 2024 International Conference for Education and Fairs (ICEF) Africa in Kigali



On Photo: Dr Obadire in Kigali

The University of Venda's International Relations and Partnerships Directorate, in collaboration with the Department of Marketing, Branding, and Communication, proudly participated in the prestigious 2024 International Conference for Education and Fairs (ICEF) Africa event held in Kigali, Rwanda. This specialist networking event, hosted at the state-of-the-art Kigali Convention Centre from 1-4 July 2024, connected international educators and esteemed representatives from different universities worldwide.

ICEF Africa stands as a beacon for the exceptional growth in international education within Sub-Saharan Africa. This gathering also featured ICEF-accredited recruitment agents from over 25 countries on the continent and around the world. On 5 July 2024, Worldview held an education fair for graduates and grade 12 high school learners from 25 high schools in the Kigali region, wherein the UNIVEN representatives engaged with prospective international students, providing insight into the University offerings.

Participating in ICEF Africa 2024, gave the University of Venda unparalleled access to these dynamic student markets. This event was a unique opportunity to forge connections with high-quality, prescreened recruitment partners and universities across the continent. The focus was on discussing alliances, exchange agreements, and transnational education opportunities, as well as providing career exhibitions to participating learners, all of which are pivotal for expanding UNIVEN's international footprint.

As part of the world-renowned ICEF events, known for fostering productive and long-lasting professional relationships, our participation underscored the University of Venda's unwavering commitment to international collaboration and student mobility. This engagement will enhance our global network and position the University of Venda as a critical player in the international education landscape, instilling confidence in our global presence.

"The University of Venda proudly showcased its academic excellence and vibrant campus life at ICEF Africa 2024, receiving an enthusiastic response from prospective students and partners. This successful event underscored our institution's appeal and has led to promising collaborations and opportunities. We remain committed to delivering world-class education and fostering global connections," said Mphinyana Nemasitoni, Schools Liaison Officer.

The University of Venda's unwavering commitment to advancing international education and fostering global partnerships is not just a source of reassurance and confidence, but also an inspiration for students and professionals across the African continent and beyond.

This dedication is a driving force behind UNIVEN's mission to contribute to the academic and professional growth of students and the development of the global education landscape, inspiring others to join this noble cause.



On photo: 2024 ICEF Pavilions of educators and universities

Mastering Leadership Excellence: Senior Management Performance Workshop for success



The University of Venda through the Human Resources Department organised a Performance Management workshop for UNIVEN Senior Managers. The workshop that was facilitated by the Talent Hub International, took place at 2Ten Hotel at Sibasa, outside Thohoyandou on Tuesday 23 July 2024.

The purpose of the Performance Management workshop for senior managers was to enhance their skills in setting goals, providing feedback, and effectively managing the performance of their teams with the ultimate goal of improving institutional performance.

Through this workshop, senior managers were equipped with best practices for conducting performance reviews, identifying areas for development, and recognising and rewarding top performers.

For the purpose of fostering a culture of continuous improvement and accountability, the workshop aimed to align individual goals with institutional objectives, ultimately driving employee engagement and productivity. Overall, the workshop equipped senior managers with the skills and knowledge needed to lead their respective teams to achieve desired outcomes and contribute to the overall success of the University.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni welcomed the participants and facilitators from the Talent Hub International, Ms Susan London and Sandra Schlebusch.

When highlighting the background, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal remarked that UNIVEN is a High Individual Performance Monitoring and Review Institution. To ensure excellent staff Performance Management, Prof Nthambeleni indicated that UNIVEN believes in the Power of Measuring Results. Hence, UNIVEN has adopted a system of the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach that aligned institutional and individual performance management.

In terms of the implementation of UNIVEN Performance Management System (PMS), he expressed that UNIVEN has a Performance Management System (PMS), and Human Resources Directorate is the custodian of the system. He showed that Performance Management is the development of the individual yearly work plan that begins with the signing of the "Performance Agreement."

The participants were informed that performance management is an ongoing process in which UNIVEN managers and employees regularly communicate to assess and review job responsibilities, expectations, performance, and development strategies, emphasising the goal which is to empower employees to perform at their best, align their efforts with the University's strategic objectives, and create a positive and fulfilling work environment for everyone.



As he concluded his welcoming remarks, Prof Nthambeleni said "A Good Performance Management System tracks the performance of employees in a manner that is consistent and measurable."

In addition, he invited everyone to participate meaningfully and ensure that UNIVEN implements this process appropriately for the achievement of institutional goals while opening developmental opportunities for staff.

The training came as follow-up of the issues and challenges that transpired during the 2023 performance reviews for Senior Management and Executive Management members which took place on 8-11 April 2024.

The Talent Hub International (TTHI) team was part of the panel invited as external experts to assist during the performance review process in April 2024. They were therefore tasked to come up with this training and include possible changes that would improve the PMS at UNIVEN. The team took the senior managers through the entire process of PMS and future improvement plans.

The Director Human Resources, Mrs Uanda Ndou expressed appreciation to the senior managers for their participation and the Directorate of ICT for designing such an impressive Performance Management System.

Mr Rudzani Mamphweli participates in an intensive training on Stakeholder and Community Engagement Exchange programme



On picture: participants working on group activity during the training

Mr Rudzani Mamphweli from the Directorate of Community Engagement Entrepreneurship Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation completed an intensive two-day course on Stakeholder and Community Engagement Exchange course hosted by the Conference Hub.

The two-day stakeholder engagement and community exchange course, conducted recently in Johannesburg, was designed to provide participants with insights, strategies, and practical tools such as stakeholder mapping, communication, planning, and impact measurement. The exchange course brought together community engagement and communication professionals from different industries, such as education, mining, manufacturing, and agriculture; it has equipped participants with the knowledge and resources needed to navigate the complexities of stakeholder engagement, maximise opportunities for collaboration, and drive sustainable success in their organisations and communities. It has also opened collaborative opportunities, making the participants feel included and part of a larger community striving for sustainable success.

Day 1 of the training focused on navigating complexity, unravelling the challenges, and seizing opportunities in stakeholder engagement; advancing change: driving social impact through corporate social responsibility; measuring the impact of the stakeholder engagement strategy; and next-generation engagement: harnessing digital tools for stakeholder insights and interaction.

Through a blend of theoretical insights and practical case studies, the presenter took participants through the dynamics of modern stakeholder relationships, emphasising how universities can adapt and thrive by embracing inclusivity, transparency, and strategic foresight in their engagement practices. The session took the participants back to the basics of understanding that the success of their organisations depends on their ability to integrate their stakeholders into their institutional strategies and practices meaningfully.

Day 2 of the training session focused on advancing community engagement strategies using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. ABCD is a strategy that enables communities to lead their own sustainable development by identifying and mobilising existing assets.

Strategic communication and stakeholder engagement are vital components of ABCD, providing essential information and fostering inclusion and value among community members, organisations, and agencies. Through the interactive discussions, participants understood ABCD principles, learned how to identify and leverage community assets, build meaningful relationships within the community, and mobilise resources for collective

action. Participants also learned how to map community assets, engage residents, and facilitate community-driven initiatives. The stakeholder engagement and community exchange allowed the participants to learn about what other organisations are doing in implementing their community engagement strategies..



From L-R: Ms Christine Breet (one of the presenters during the training) and Mr Rudzani Mamphweli

University of Venda Representatives Join Study in Africa Executive Committee



Two University of Venda members have been appointed to the executive committee and board of the Study in Africa initiative. The launch of the Study in Africa initiative occurred on 3 July 2024 at Kigali, Rwanda, during the 2024 ICEF Africa Conference. Dr Segun Obadire, Director of International Relations and Partnerships has been elected Head of Events and Conferences. His extensive experience and dedication to the academic community will undoubtedly contribute to the initiative's success. In his new role, Dr Obadire will oversee the organisation and execution of events and conferences to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among institutions.

Mphinyana Nemasitoni, experienced in communication, marketing and student recruitment, has been appointed the Head of Student Recruitment and Enrolment. His role will be crucial in the development and execution of effective student recruitment strategy, retention, and enrolment, driving the initiative's efforts to attract and enrol students from worldwide to Africa, ensuring that the African continent educational institutions' recruitment remains competitive on the global stage.

Study in Africa is a groundbreaking initiative that aims to bridge the gap between African universities and other institutions of higher learning worldwide and the vibrant student market in Africa. It provides tailored solutions that empower institutions to attract top talent to Africa while assisting universities within the continent in expanding their reach internationally. By focusing on student recruitment and strategic partnerships, Study in Africa aims to create a robust network of educational opportunities that benefit both students and institutions, empowering them to shape the future of education..



On photo above: Dr Segun Obadire, Director of International Relations and Partnerships



On photo above: Mr Mphinyana Nemasitoni

UNIVEN's Research Open Day Ignites Innovation



Prof Jabulani Makhubele

On Friday, 19 July 2024, the University of Venda hosted an exciting Research Open Day. The event featured engaging presentations from esteemed postgraduate student researchers showcasing their groundbreaking work across various disciplines. Attendees were able to engage directly with the researchers and gain a deeper understanding of the cutting-edge research happening at UNIVEN.

According to Prof Jabulani Makhubele, Director of Research and Innovation, when introducing the external guests, the Research Open Day provides an interactive platform for our esteemed researchers to showcase their latest findings and network with fellow enthusiasts, postgraduate students, and other researchers. The event not only presents an opportunity to gain deeper insights into the research being conducted at UNIVEN, but also creates a forum for discussing ideas and exploring potential collaborations for future projects."



The Directorate of Research and Innovation (DRI) Group Photo

Prof. Feza continued, "at UNIVEN, we pride ourselves on our commitment to research that improves the quality of life and advances our society. Our research goes beyond the traditional boundaries of science, exploring the rich tapestry of human culture and social development, enriching understanding of our communities and the world. The research showcased at our event is not just a theoretical exercise, but a call to action for a better tomorrow."



On Photo: Prof Nosisi Feza, UNIVEN's Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Postgraduate Studies

Prof. Feza concluded by encouraging the audience to uphold the highest standards of integrity in their research endeavors, emphasising the importance of academic integrity and ethical behavior. She said, "Research must be conducted with utmost integrity, avoiding plagiarism and maintaining academic honesty. We cannot afford to compromise our principles in pursuit of discovery. If we lose sight of ethics and integrity in research, we risk wasting resources, violating ethical standards, and betraying our responsibility to society."

The 2024 UNIVEN Research Open Day also featured a dynamic booth competition, where researchers had the opportunity to showcase their research in an engaging and informative manner. With vibrant displays of posters and experimental setups, interactive elements, the booths effectively communicated the topic, methodology, findings, and real-world implications of each research project. An esteemed panel of faculty judges were present to evaluate each booth, considering factors such as creativity, clarity, sci-

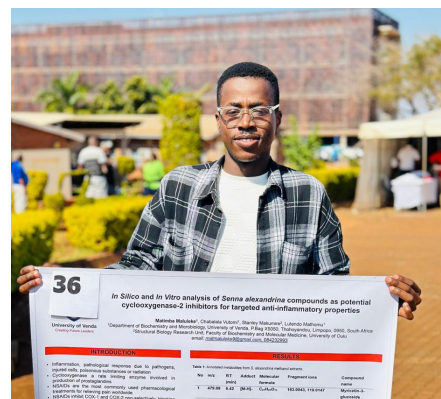
entific merit, and audience engagement.

Amongst the postgraduate student researchers who participated in the event, Mr. Matimba Maluleke, expressed his excitement for the 2024 UNIVEN Research Open Day, stating "This day has been nothing short of amazing. Not only did I showcased my research, but I also gained valuable feedback from my peers, professors and experts. This experience has affirmed my belief in the importance of research and the need for collaboration and engagement."



The 2024 UNIVEN Research Open Day welcomed various companies and organisations such as the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), National Research Foundation (NRF), National Intellectual Property Management Office (NIPMO) and Technology Innovation Agency (TIA).

Prof Nosisi Feza, UNIVEN's Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Postgraduate Studies, highlighted the significance of the Research Open Day, expressing her appreciation for the esteemed guests and emphasising the role of research in knowledge creation, problem-solving, economic growth, informed decision-making, and education and training.



On Photo: Mr. Matimba Maluleke



On Photo: An emerging UNIVEN Researcher

Elevating Research Standards: Empowering Ethics Committee Members for Integrity and Compliance



Group photo of the participants

Members of the Research Ethics Committee and reviewers of ethics applications received two days of training on Research Ethics and Integrity. The University of Venda's Directorate of Research and Innovation facilitated the training. The training occurred from 24 to 25 July at the Research Conference Centre.

The focus of the training was to enhance knowledge and understanding of research ethics and integrity among UNIVEN committee members and reviewers from different faculties to ensure the protection of research participants and researchers and promote responsible conduct and ethical research practices. The training investigated the main principles of research ethics, discussed common ethical challenges faced by researchers, ethics committee members, and reviewers, and explored strategies for upholding integrity in the research process. The ultimate goal was to equip research ethics committee members with the necessary tools and knowledge to make informed decisions and promote ethical conduct in all research activities. Mr Winston. A. Beukes from Stellenbosch University and Mr. Siyanda Manqele from the University of Zululand facilitated the training. Both facilitators represented the research ethics and integrity Community of Practices in Southern Africa and SARIMA (Southern Africa Research and Innovation Management Association).



On Photo: Mr Winston A. Beukes

On the first day of the training, Mr. Winston A. Beukes, the Manager for Animal Ethics, Biosafety, and Permit Compliance at Stellenbosch University, spoke about animal ethics, biosafety, and compliance, specifically on the following topics: culture of research integrity and compliance, veterinary supervision and support; harm-benefit analysis; responsible conduct of research and collaborators; appropriate institutional policies and procedures; and the use of animals in community projects.

Day two's highlights included the following sub-

jects, which were led by Siyanda Manqele, Manager of Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Zululand. Historical background of research ethics and Research Ethics Committee (REC) 's roles and responsibilities; National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) Audit process (Active and Passive monitoring in accordance with the new guidelines); Department of Health (DoH) 2024 draft guidelines; an in-depth analysis; Research Ethics vs. Community Access; and Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) review case studies with a UNIVEN focus.



On Photo: Mr Siyanda Manqele

Training research ethics committee members and reviewers has been seen as crucial to safeguarding the rights and well-being of research participants, researchers, and institutional reputation, ensuring the reliability, validity, and credibility of research findings and upholding the reputation of the research community. The training enhanced members' understanding of ethical principles, regulations, and best practices, equipping them to effectively evaluate research proposals, oversee studies, and address ethical issues that may arise. Ultimately, well-trained committee members and reviewers play a vital role in promoting ethical conduct, maintaining public trust in research, and upholding the ethical standards for scientific progress. Professor Yoshan Moodley of the Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture at the University of Venda, welcomed the participants.

In her concluding remarks, Prof. Mari Manjoro expressed her gratitude to the facilitators for their captivating Research Ethics and Integrity presentations. She emphasised that the importance of training was to promote the understanding and application of ethical principles in research and teaching through case studies that demonstrate how to navigate integrity difficulties in research ef-

fectively. Prof Manjoro highlighted that conducting research requires accountability. She further said, "We should not grow weary but should keep improving, particularly in training and empowering reviewers, research ethics committee members, and researchers. We are improving gradually as an institution. We should impart this knowledge to our students as well".



We would like to hear from you!

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Dr Takalani Dzaga
Chief editor

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Coordinator

Mr Peter Mashishi
Contributor

Ms Mushoni Mulaudzi
Preservation (Library)

Send your contributions to:

Welheminah Mabogo,
Nendila Coordinator
University of Venda,
Private Bag x5050
Thohoyandou, 0950

Contact Details:

Tel: 015 962 8525

e-mail:

welheminah.mabogo@univen.ac.za