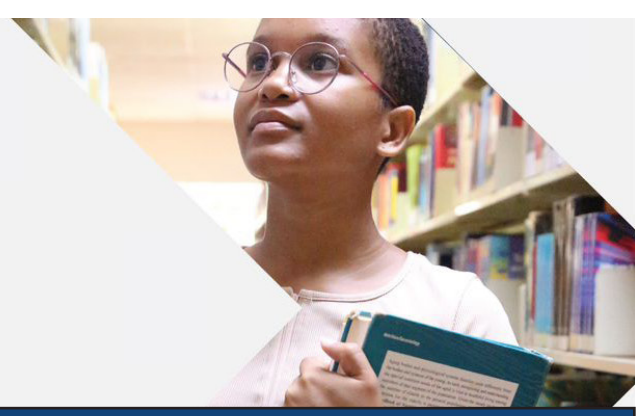




University of Venda  
Creating Future Leaders

# UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



ISSUE 04 | 02 October 2024

## A Night to Remember: UNIVEN Hosts Successful Dinner with Prominent Alumni

The University of Venda Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Bernard Nthambeleni hosted a highly successful special gathering with university prominent alumni to showcase recent achievements and strengthen connections under the theme “The Strategic role of alumni in positioning UNIVEN as a centre for creating future leaders.” Through the reflections made, it was apparent that the breathtaking accomplishments shared by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, triggered the attention of the alumni to consider taking their rightful positions in the advancement of the University of Venda.

This exclusive event sponsored by Old Mutual, took place on Friday, 27 September 2024 in Old Mutual Hall, Sandton, Johannesburg.

Over 200 alumni attended the gathering that fostered networking opportunities, creating a platform for the university to engage with successful graduates. Alumni shared inspiring stories, offered valuable advice, and demonstrated the impact of their university education on their careers. The evening showcased the strong bond between the university and its graduates, highlighting a sense of community and pride. As former students reflected on their academic journey and professional accomplishments, the event reinforced the importance of education and mentorship in shaping successful careers. The atmosphere was filled with excitement and nostalgia as attendees reminisced about their time at the university and shared their professional journeys.



**On photo:** Some of the Alumni pose for a photo with the University Executive Management

The event was a resounding success, attracting notable alumni from a diverse range of industries, including but not limited to entrepreneurs, Chief Executive Officers, Directors General, Legal Practitioners, MEC's and parliamentarians. Their presence underscored the university's reputation for producing graduates who are locally relevant and globally competitive and excel in their respective fields.



Keynote speaker Professor Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda, gave a comprehensive presentation about the University Strategic direction. He expressed his profound gratitude to all the alumni for making time out of their tight schedules. Professor Nthambeleni also appreciated the role played by the Executive Committee of Convocation under the leadership of the President, Sylvester Motadi who was also in attendance.

Talking about new UNIVEN strategic trajectory, Vision 2040, he shared that the University of Venda is on an ambitious strategic journey to become an entrepreneurial university underpinned by student-centered, innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Professor Nthambeleni highlighted several UNIVEN Academic Projects and pointed out that UNIVEN top the list amongst the Comprehensive universities in South Africa with the highest enrolment numbers in science and mathematics.

In terms of university successes, he shared several achievements in the fields of research, community engagement, teaching, and learning. As guided by UNIVEN 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, he presented that the university would remain an institution that puts high on its agenda, Engaged Scholarship as an attribute that surpasses our individual and personal interest, rather focused on the service of humanity.

He also shared some of notable achievements such as Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting/CTA that received full accreditation from SAICA and the Council on Higher Education; establishment of UNVEN Law School, Business Advisory Centre in Makhado Crossing Mall, UNIVEN acquired a piece of land in Makhado Local Municipality with the plans to establish a University of Venda satellite campus in Makhado, Louis Trichardt; launch of the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation (UCFERI); Creation of two research niche areas; Establishment of the Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTCI); Launch and Operationalisation of the Advancement Unit; Implementation of funding initiatives to assist both postgraduate and selected undergraduate students, and many more.

Professor Nthambeleni further shared the University rankings by Times Higher Education. Furthermore, he highlighted Infrastructure Development asserting current infrastructure projects and planned infrastructure projects.

He concluded his speech by emphasizing that the strategic involvement of UNIVEN alumni is indispensable for fostering an environment that nurtures and empowers future leaders. In addition, he said "Your contributions, in myriad forms, are not only beneficial but imperative for the continued growth and success of our institution. It is through a strong, supportive, and engaged alumni network that we will assert the University of Venda as an unrivalled centre for cultivating future leaders. Let us forge ahead confidently, leveraging our collective strengths, knowledge, and networks to achieve this noble objective."



Old Mutual Regional General Manager, Ms. Thenjiwe Ramorotho

The evening featured inspiring speeches that



highlighted the University's role in shaping the careers of its alumni. The speakers emphasised the value of the education they received and how it prepared them for the challenges of the real world. Old Mutual was represented by its Regional General Manager, Ms Thenjiwe Ramorotheo who shared programmes and services available at Old Mutual.



In addition to the speeches, CEO of Price Water Coopers, Ms Shirley Machaba talked on behalf of Alumni. The event provided ample opportunities for networking. Alumni reconnected with former classmates and professors as well as building relationships with each other and with the university.



Old Mutual Client Director, Mr Gumani Tshikovhi in welcoming the guests thanked UNIVEN for choosing Old Mutual to host its notable alumni event.



The President of Convocation, Mr Sylvester Motadi in his remarks, encouraged all the alumni present to support their alma mater's strategic goals and objectives. He made a call that they should be active alumni and provide all kind of support to the growth and development of the University.



Deputy Vice-Chancellor Corporate Services, Dr Robert Martin highlighted the purpose of the engagement session as being to showcase recent achievements and strengthen connections with the University alumni. He further expressed that alumni are important to the continued development of their alma mater, and it is evident that a carefully cultivated alumni relationship can bring many long-term benefits, including industry knowledge and networks.

The event featured alumni of different generations since the university's inception. This was considered an opportune moment for exploring areas of possible collaborations, including internship opportunities for the university graduates. The alumni made it explicit that one of the most obvious ways that they can plough back to their alma mater and empower graduates is through in-kind donations. This entails a situation where alumni donate their time and expertise. It was apparent through the engagement that the event succeeded in rekindling bonds with the university notable alumni.



The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, Professor Nosisi Feza took the opportunity to share the prestigious World Heritage Irrigation Structures Award in South Africa that was received by Professor Sylvester Mpandeli. The award was handed over at International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage's 75th International Executive Council meeting held in Sydney, Australia on 1-7 September 2024. This is the first time that a South African irrigation structure has received the award since its inception in 2012.



## Bridging the Gap: Fostering Stronger Bonds through University Engagement with Royal Leaders

As part of the University continued commitment to fostering strong collaborative relationships with the local communities, the University had a fruitful engagement with the three local royal leaders of Muledane, Maungani and Ngovhela. The delegations from these areas were respectively led by Chief Tshifhiwa Mahwasane, Chief Nkhangweleni Masiagwala and Chief Mbulaheni Arnold Sikhwivhilu. The meeting took place at Premier Hotel, Thohoyandou on Sunday 15 September 2024. The University of Venda team was led by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni.

The purpose of the engagement was to strengthen relationships with these leaders and to consider critical issues affecting both the University and surrounding communities.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal pointed out that “We are excited to announce the University’s commitment to strengthening our relationship with royal leaders. Their wisdom and guidance are invaluable as we work together to create a more inclusive and culturally responsive academic environment. By engaging with royal leaders, we aim to enrich our educational offerings and foster a deeper sense of community and respect for diverse perspectives.



This partnership underscores our dedication to honouring and preserving the rich cultural heritage of our region.”

Prof Nthambeleni stressed that the University highly values the role of royal leadership in shaping and supporting its growth.

The royal leaders expressed their willingness to work with the University and confirmed the -

anticipated impact of the University in advancement of their respective communities, particularly considering their proximity to the University.

It was unanimously agreed that the University will keep the royal leadership abreast of the developments taking place within the University and that a team would be assembled to ensure effective implementation of all matters which were tabled in this engagement.



# The University of Venda and GTCI Host the “Understanding China” Workshops

The Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTCI) at the University of Venda warmly hosted the Chinese Culture Workshops on Wednesday, 18 September 2024 at GTCI, Art Gallery. The purpose of these workshops was to foster a reunion and to deepen understanding of Chinese traditions, culture and history. The Chinese Culture Workshops included two sessions, the morning session “The Mid-Autumn Festival” celebration, and the afternoon session “Taichi lecture and practice”.

The Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as Zhongqiu Festival, is a traditional Chinese holiday that is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar which falls on September 17th solar calendar this year. This festival is renowned for its bright and round moon appreciation, delicious moon cake (yuebing) tasting, and various cultural customs and beautiful legends.



*Students and staff members who participated in the workshop*

In the morning session for the Mid-Autumn Festival, the event began with beautiful melodies performed by a group of GTCI students participating in the Chinese language programme. The GTCI UNIVEN Director, Prof Eric Maluta welcomed the audience and the Chinese Director, Prof Grace GE introduced the purpose of the event.

The GTCI Lecturer Ted XIONG gave an enriching cultural lecture on the origin and customs of the festival and a variety of related activities.

Participants actively engaged in discussions, reflecting on questions such as “If you were Chang’e, would you consume the elixir when Pengmeng tries to steal it”. Many participants shared their thoughts and viewpoints. The session also included games such as a challenge where participants worked in pairs to use chopsticks to retrieve small moon-shaped ping pong balls from water. The team that collected the most “moons” received a small gift.



In the afternoon session for Chinese Taichi, Professor YE Xiao, Director of Confucius Institute of University of Coimbra, Portugal, delivered a public lecture on “Chinese Taichi and Chikung Exercises for Health Preservation”.

He said Taichi and Chikung exercises are traditional Chinese exercises that have been developed, practiced and refined over the centuries. Research has demonstrated how effective these practices are for promoting physical and mental well-being, strengthening the body and immune system, and preventing diseases.

It has gradually become well-known and been practiced around the world. Harvard University included Taichi exercise for rehabilitation of Parkinson disease as the research programme in 2020.

On 17 December 2020, Taichi was listed as World Intangible Cultural Heritage. In his lecture, Professor YE Xiao combined pictures, videos and movement demonstrations to vividly show the distinctive features of Taichi which incorporates the body, the mind and the breath, exploring the wisdom behind them. After the lecture, he led the participants to practice the Taichi skills in the art room. Participants listened to Professor YE attentively and followed his movements eagerly.

The Understanding China workshop series provides a platform for participants to learn about and appreciate Chinese culture, traditions, and history. It benefits the UNIVEN community in terms of cross-cultural communication, mutual learning and understanding, and extra-curriculum activity enrichment.

## Supervising Success for Effective Supervisory Skills: A Workshop for Emerging Supervisors



The University of Venda (UNIVEN) recently hosted a workshop to equip emerging supervisors with necessary skills to excel in their leadership roles. This two-day comprehensive workshop to enhance supervisory capabilities took place from 19-20 September 2024, at 2Ten Hotel.

In his welcome remarks, Prof Lutendo Murulana gave key objectives about the workshop that was organised to enhance supervisory skills and knowledge as well as to address common challenges faced by emerging supervisors.

Mr Khathutshelo Mashavhathakha talked about the support that is available for supervisors as well as the students. He further told supervisors to be aware of the institutional support structures which are becoming more common.

Supervision workshops and skills development have proved to be beneficial in improving student perceptions of the research experience.

“The supervision engagement should be structured with clear goals, expectations and outcomes that are collectively agreed upon.

The engagement should embrace collaboration, participation and flexibility.” said Mr Mashavhathakha.

The workshop focused on the models of supervision and how entrepreneurship should be incorporated into supervision as well as grant funding and turning research output into research articles. This was a great opportunity to learn, connect, and grow in the journey of guiding future researchers.

Prof Michael Chimoyo speaking on models of supervision said emerging supervisors still have energy and potential to implement UNIVEN vision on engaged scholarship and entrepreneurship on models of supervision as he gave roles of supervisors/co-supervisors and collaborators supervisory styles and students role in research, saying being an emerging supervisor is a good thing and an opportunity that everyone should not miss.

By the end of the workshop, participants were equipped with skills and confidence to become exceptional supervisors, contributing to the overall success of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture at UNIVEN.

**If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus - contact the University Hotline by calling toll free number 0800 212 755 or email: [univenhotline@tip-offs.com](mailto: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.**