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## Honouring Excellence of a Trailblaser on a Gala Dinner as UNIVEN Bids Farewell to Prof Nosisi Nellie Feza

On 29 January 2025, an atmosphere of gratitude and admiration filled the Premier Hotel as the University of Venda (UNIVEN) bid a heartfelt farewell to Prof Nosisi Feza, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Research and Postgraduate Studies. The joint farewell dinner, attended by the Council and Senior Management Committee (SMC), celebrated Prof Feza's contributions to the university's academic landscape.



*Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda*

A moving tribute and well wishes was alluded by Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, who expressed deep appreciation for Prof Feza's unwavering commitment to advancing postgraduate studies. He lauded her in transformative leadership as DVC for Research and Postgraduate Studies at UNIVEN. Prof Nthambeleni highlighted her role in strengthening the university's research capacity, driving institutional change, and championing the empowerment of young and female researchers.

"Her contributions have elevated the university's academic standing, ensuring sustainable policies and impactful reforms. As she moves on to a new role, the university extends its best wishes, acknowledging her legacy and confidence in her continued success." Said Prof Nthambeleni.

The evening commenced with an opening and welcome address by Mr Botwe Kraziya, Chief Operating Officer, who set the tone reflecting on a pivotal learning experience early in his career, emphasising the importance of collaboration, mentorship, and accountability in higher education. He shared a personal anecdote about budgeting challenges and acknowledged the invaluable guidance of Professor Feza, who not only helped him navigate the complexities of university finance but also shaped his understanding of the sector. He expressed deep respect and gratitude as well as highlighting her significant impact on his professional growth and the importance of recognising those who have influenced our lives and expressing confidence in continued collaboration.

Dr Takalani Dzaga, Director of Marketing, Branding and Communication outlined the purpose and significance of the gathering, emphasising that the event intended to honour and celebrate the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Postgraduate Studies.

The highlight of the evening was the farewell message delivered by Prof Eucebious Lekalakala-Mokgele, DVC for Teaching and Learning to Professor Nosisi Feza, honouring her legacy as a dedicated scholar, advocate for women, and leader in research and postgraduate studies. She praised Prof Feza's integrity, courage, and compassion, highlighting her impact on students and the university's academic standing. Expressing deep gratitude and personal loss, she wished her success in her future endeavours, reminding her that she is not alone on her journey. Her message concluded with a biblical blessing (Exodus 13:21), acknowledging Prof Feza's enduring influence and inspiration.

The Council representative, Dr Ryneth Mbhele expressed gratitude to Professor Feza, acknowledging her transformative impact on research at the university. She expressed how Prof Feza brought clarity, support, and advocacy for women, ensuring lasting benefits. She wished her success and encouraged her to continue being her honest, fearless self.



*Prof Nosisi Feza, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Postgraduate Studies*

In her response, Prof Nosisi Feza expressed heartfelt gratitude to UNIVEN for the support and collaboration. Prof Feza reflected on her journey at the university, emphasising her upbringing, leadership style, and deep love for students and staff. She described her challenges, pushing colleagues to excellence, and her vision of the university as a diamond that needed polishing. She urged staff to see students as the core of the institution and to embrace collaboration and transformation.

She concluded with a call to the university leadership for continued support, unity, and a commitment to the university's growth. Her words resonated with warmth and appreciation, leaving an impression to everyone.

The evening concluded with a vote of thanks by Mrs Beauty Mutheiwana, Director of Supply Chain Management and Expenditure, who extended sincere gratitude to Mr Kraziya, the COO, for his warm welcome, and to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal for reminding the audience of the significance of the DVC Research and Postgraduate Studies position, highlighting Professor Feza's impactful contributions in research output, women and young researchers empowerment. "To Professor Feza, thank you for sharing your personal journey, lessons, and your experiences at UNIVEN, as well as your constructive engagement with staff. Your commitment to the university is valued, and we look forward to continued collaboration." Said Mrs Mutheiwana.



*Group photo of Prof Nosisi Feza (middle) with members of Council*



**On photo:** *Prof Nosisi Feza with some members of Senior Management Committee*

The farewell dinner was not just a send-off; it was a tribute to a visionary leader whose impact will be felt for years to come.

**Issued by:**

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