



University of Venda
Creating future leaders

Excitement in the Air as University of Venda Celebrates and Opens Academic Year with Excellence Awards



Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) marked the beginning of the 2025 academic year with an inspiring and memorable official opening ceremony held on Tuesday, 04 February 2025, at the University Auditorium. The event, graced by students, academic and support staff, set the tone for a year of excellence, innovation, and strategic growth for the institution.

When delivering his keynote address, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, outlined an inspiring message of hope and determination. Welcoming both new and returning students, he emphasised the significance of academic excellence, inclusivity, and innovation in driving the university's mission. Prof Nthambeleni congratulated new students for securing their places out of a competitive pool of over 120,000 applicants, highlighting their exceptional matric results and encouraging them to take full responsibility for their academic journey.

For returning students, Prof. Nthambeleni commended their resilience and dedication, urging them to set new goals and strive for greater achievements. He shared the university's remarkable milestones, including its consistent performance in national and international rankings, such as being listed among the top 15 universities in South Africa and ranking 11th out of 88 universities in Sub-Saharan Africa by Times Higher Education. These accolades reflect the hard work of the university's staff and students, as well as the institution's dedication to research, teaching excellence, and community engagement.

Prof Nthambeleni also outlined the university's core values, including quality, accountability, respect, and diversity, encouraging students to embody these principles in their academic and personal lives. He concluded, by reaffirming the university's commitment to providing quality education, enhancing infrastructure, and supporting student success.



Director Centre for Higher Education, Teaching and Learning, Prof Lindiwe Mulaudzi

Prof Lindiwe Mulaudzi, Director of the Centre for Higher Education, Teaching, and Learning, recognised the academic excellence of 338 undergraduate students across all four faculties who achieved a minimum 75% average in their final exams without second attempts. These awards, established in 2010, celebrate students' dedication and perseverance while promoting a culture of academic excellence. Prof Mulaudzi highlighted the importance of values such as objectivity, discipline, and integrity, and emphasised the role of both personal determination and external support in student success.

She also expressed gratitude to sponsors and academic staff for creating an environment that nurtures growth and learning. This year marks the 15th anniversary of the awards, which continues to motivate students and inspire excellence.



Mr Botwe Kraziya, Chief Operating Officer

Mr Botwe Kraziya, the Chief Operating Officer expressed his gratitude to all attendees, particularly the students being honoured, academic staff, and university leadership for their contributions to the success of the awards ceremony. He commended the academic staff for their hard work and dedication in supporting students' achievements and encouraged all students, including those who did not win awards, to continue striving for excellence.



The Best Overall student of the Vice-Chancellor's Student Academic Excellence Awards, Pir Sabnam (right), receiving her awards from the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni

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Group photo of award recipients posing with their certificates

Mr Botwe Kraziya congratulated the prize winners and, encouraged them to celebrate their hard work responsibly. Mr Kraziya acknowledged the need to consider similar recognition for postgraduate students in the future. Concluding his remarks, he encouraged students to remain focused and work hard, reiterating the university's commitment to supporting them in both academic and operational aspects of their journey.

A highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the Vice-Chancellor's Student Academic Excellence Awards. These prestigious accolades were awarded to students who demonstrated outstanding academic performance in the previous year. The awards serve not only as recognition of hard work and dedication but also as inspiration for the broader student community to strive for similar achievements. As the academic year unfolds, the University of Venda remains steadfast in its mission to empower students and staff to excel. The official opening ceremony has set a high benchmark for what promises to be a transformative year for the institution.



Award recipients posing with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (3rd from right), University Registrar, Dr Joel Baloyi (2nd from right) and Director CHEIL, Prof Lindiwe Mulaudzi (3rd from left).

Changing Lives for better: Musician Makhadzi Donates Registration Fees to 10 University of Venda Students

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) became one of the lucky beneficiaries when 10 students were selected to have their registration fees fully paid, following Makhadzi's call for assistance. This generous act took place on 31 January 2025, during the Official Opening of first year student orientation at the UNIVEN Auditorium.

Makhadzi, whose full name is Ndivhudzannyi Ralivhona, expressed her desire to support students facing barriers to furthering their education. The artist's social media post was clear: "I would like to assist 20 students by covering their registration fees!" She did not only make her intentions public, but she also followed through, visiting the University of Venda personally to ensure that her promise was fulfilled.

Speaking to the students gathered at UNIVEN Auditorium, Makhadzi shared her inspiring journey, emphasising the power of faith and perseverance. "I believe you have seen everything online; I have shared everything. That is the main reason I am here today," she said.

Makhadzi's words resonated deeply with the students in attendance as she reminded them of the importance of staying true to themselves and the role of love and unity

in overcoming obstacles. "I understand that bullying can take many forms, and I did not want anyone to feel uncomfortable, so I chose to offer my support without singling anyone out. But most importantly, I am here to fulfil my promise to pay the registration fees for the students I said I would support," she added.

The University of Venda's Student Representative Council (SRC) president expressed gratitude for Makhadzi's unwavering commitment to students, thanking her for her efforts and the positive impact she has made on their academic journey.

Makhadzi also took the opportunity to reflect on her own journey and the power of miracles. "I do not know much about university life and its struggles, but God chose me and blessed me with the talent to make money. Now, I am here, sharing some of the little money that I have with you. This is the power of God," she said.

A first-year student at UNIVEN, whose registration fees were paid by Makhadzi, shared his emotional gratitude: "I come from a family where both parents are unemployed, and we struggle to make ends meet. I am so thankful for this assistance from Makhadzi



Director Revenue and Financial Aid, Ms Tshilidzi Ramulondi (left) witnessing Makhadzi (2nd from left) making payment

because without her, paying registration fee would have been impossible. I will not be taking a gap year because of the assistance from her. I am forever grateful for the opportunity that she has given me."

This student has also shared a personal revelation, "I am not funded due to lack of knowledge, I did not apply for funding though I have an existing NSFAS profile."

This donation highlights the impact of Makhadzi's intervention in a deeply personal and life-changing way.

Makhadzi's dedication to uplifting students from diverse backgrounds serves as a

powerful reminder that sometimes, all it takes is one act of kindness to change the trajectory of someone's life. Her contribution not only provides financial relief but also fosters hope and encouragement for a brighter future.

In a world where the cost of education continues to rise, Makhadzi's selfless support is a shining example of how individuals can make a tangible difference in the lives of others. Her message of love, unity, and unwavering support for education is one that will resonate with students, families, and communities for years to come.

Celebrating Excellence: Three Newly NRF-Rated Professors from the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture

The University of Venda's Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture (FSEA) is proud to announce the achievement of three of its esteemed professors who have been recently awarded prestigious ratings by the National Research Foundation (NRF) for 2025. These recognitions underscore the academic rigor, groundbreaking research, and exceptional contributions that these professors have made to their respective fields.

PROF JOSEPH BALOYI: A Leader in Animal Nutrition Research



Prof Joseph Baloyi, a trailblazer in the field of Animal Science, has earned a C2 rating from the NRF, effective 1 January 2025. This honour highlights his profound contributions to Animal Nutrition, cementing his status as a thought leader in sustainable livestock feed practices.

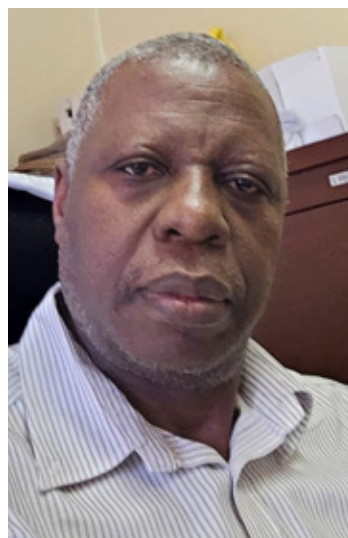
Prof Baloyi's academic journey is marked by international acclaim, from his MSc in Animal Nutrition from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland to his PhD in Animal Nutrition from the University of Zimbabwe.

Prof Baloyi's research focuses on evaluating agricultural and industrial by-products as potential protein supplements for ruminant animals. His work has significantly advanced feed supplementation strategies, with a clear emphasis on sustainability.

Over the years, Prof Baloyi has not only published over 100 peer-reviewed papers but has also mentored more than 20 postgraduate students, helping shape the next generation of scientists.

His recent recognition from the NRF follows a distinguished career marked by prestigious fellowships, including his recent tenure as a USA Fulbright Fellow at the University of Georgia. Prof Baloyi's C2 rating is a testament to his commitment to academic excellence, and it will undoubtedly empower him to continue pioneering innovative research in sustainable animal feed practices.

PROF FELIX FUSHAI: Pioneering Climate- Smart Livestock Nutrition



Prof Felix Fushai, Head of the Department of Animal Science, has also been awarded a C2 rating for his outstanding research on climate-smart livestock nutrition. With over 33 years of experience in livestock research and extension services, Prof Fushai has become a recognised authority on land use and livestock enterprise planning. His focus on developing resilient and sustainable livestock feeding systems for arid and semi-arid regions is of critical importance in the context of climate change.

Prof Fushai's work emphasises practical solutions for enhancing food security in Southern Africa, particularly in the face of changing climatic conditions. His ongoing research, supported by a R1.2 million NRF Research and Technology Fund grant, is advancing climate-smart strategies that will have a lasting impact on the region's agricultural systems.

Under Prof Fushai's leadership, the University of Venda has seen the graduation of numerous MSc and PhD students, with Prof. Fushai winning the 2024 Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Award for his exceptional mentorship. His academic contributions extend beyond his research publications; he has presented his findings at numerous international and national conferences, advancing global discussions on climate resilience in livestock production.

PROF NTAKADZENI EDWIN MADALA: Innovator in Mass Spectrometry and Phytochemical Research



Prof Ntakadzeni Edwin Madala has received a C1 rating from the NRF, acknowledging his innovative research in biochemistry, mass spectrometry, and plant science. Affiliated with the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology at the University of Venda, Prof Madala has made groundbreaking contributions to the phytochemical characterisation of underutilised green leafy vegetables from South Africa's Limpopo province.

His pioneering work on the effects of excessive sunlight, driven by climate change, on plant chemistry has been instrumental in understanding how plants adapt to environmental stress.

Prof Madala's use of ion mobility mass spectrometry to identify light-induced metabolites in plants has set a global benchmark in the field.

His research group has also facilitated the acquisition of advanced mass spectrometry instruments at the University of Venda, positioning the institution as a leader in this highly specialised field.

Beyond his research, Prof. Madala has trained a new generation of scientists through his work with MSc and PhD students. He has authored over 120 publications, including research articles and book chapters, and is a strong advocate for cost-effective approaches to metabolite identification, particularly for countries facing financial constraints.

A Commitment to Excellence and Innovation

The recognition of these three professors by the NRF highlights the University of Venda's commitment to fostering academic excellence and addressing critical challenges through innovative research. Prof. Baloyi, Prof. Fushai, and Prof. Madala's achievements reflect the university's dedication to advancing knowledge and contributing solutions to global challenges, from sustainable agriculture to climate change adaptation.

As these accomplished researchers continue to make groundbreaking strides in their respective fields, their success stands as a testament to the transformative power of higher education and the importance of supporting research that makes a tangible impact on society. The University of Venda is poised to continue leading the way in addressing the pressing issues of our time through the expertise and dedication of its faculty members.

"I am immensely proud to celebrate the remarkable achievement of our three newly NRF-rated professors. Their dedication, innovative research, and exceptional contributions to their fields not only elevate the reputation of our faculty but also inspire the next generation of scholars. This recognition is a testament to their hard work, and I am excited to see the continued impact they will make in advancing science, engineering, and agriculture," highlighted Prof Natasha Potgieter, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture.

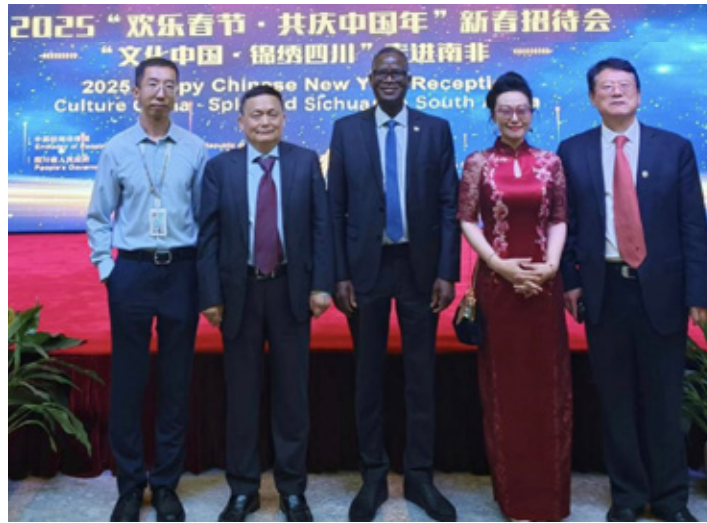
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A Vibrant Exchange: UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal Prof Bernard Nthambeleni Attends the 2025 Chinese New Year Reception at the Chinese Embassy

On 22 January 2025, Professor Bernard Nthambeleni, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda (UNIVEN), attended the Happy Chinese New Year Reception at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Pretoria, South Africa. The event was held at the invitation of His Excellency Ambassador WU Peng of the Chinese Embassy.

During the celebration, Prof Nthambeleni had the opportunity to engage with a diverse range of guests, including directors of Confucius Institutes across South Africa. They exchanged insights on the status and prospects of these institutes, exploring potential collaborations that could further strengthen educational and cultural ties between South Africa and China.

In addition to these discussions, Prof Nthambeleni met with Mr Shen Long, the Minister Counsellor of Science and Technology at the Chinese Embassy to discuss the application of the BeiDou Satellite Navigation System at the UNIVEN campus.



Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (center), poses for a photo with the Minister Counsellor Mr SHEN Long (second from left) and the First Secretary in Education Mr ZHAO Yong (first from left) from the Chinese Embassy



The UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (fifth from right), with Counsellors from the Chinese Embassy and the CI Directors in South Africa



The UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (left) poses for a photo with the Chinese Ambassador Mr WU Peng (center) and the Co-Director of UNIVEN GTCI Prof Grace GE (right)

Their conversation also touched on the prospect of establishing a joint research centre (JRC) aimed at broadening collaboration between UNIVEN and Chinese academic partners. The joint research initiative is expected to be supported by both the South African and Chinese governments.

Ms YANG Shu, who oversees the China-Aid Programme at the Chinese Embassy, highlighted the Embassy's support for UNIVEN staff members, with five individuals sponsored to attend Chinese government seminars in 2024. Looking ahead, she confirmed that additional UNIVEN staff would be sponsored for upcoming seminars organised by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

Mr Li Yuanzheng, responsible for Educational and Cultural Cooperation at the Chinese Embassy, shared that the Embassy plans to support UNIVEN in deepening its engagement and running more collaborative programmes in conjunction with the upcoming 2025 G20 Summit in South Africa.

The event also offered a cultural exploration of the Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival. Celebrated as the most important holiday in Chinese culture, it marks the start of the lunar new year and the arrival of spring. Traditions include family reunions, house cleaning to clear out bad luck, and the giving of red envelopes containing money to symbolize good fortune and prosperity.

Chinese New Year is widely celebrated beyond China, with festivals taking place in countries with significant Chinese or Sinophone populations across Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas. In 2025, the Chinese New Year will begin on 29 January, ushering in the Year of the Snake, which is traditionally associated with balance, harmony and the power of the colour red, believed to ward off misfortune.

This year's celebrations at the Chinese Embassy highlighted the enduring cultural and academic exchanges between China and South Africa, with both nations reinforcing their commitment to deeper cooperation across various sectors.

A New Chapter for the University: Introducing the Chief Operating Officer and His Vision for Success

On 03 February 2025, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni introduced the newly appointed Chief Operating Officer (COO), Mr Botwe Kraziya to the departments under his division. This important moment follows a significant structural shift at the university with the recent retirement of Dr Robert Martin, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Corporate Services, in December 2024. In response, the University of Venda Council reconfigured the DVC role, replacing it with the COO position. This new role encompasses oversight of key departments such as Human Resources, ICT, Facilities Management, Protection Services, and Marketing, Branding, and Communication.



Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni when introducing the Chief Operating Officer.

A New Role for a New Era

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal explained the reasoning behind this reconfiguration, emphasising that the COO position would provide essential operational support for the university's core functions—teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. This strategic shift, the Vice-Chancellor expressed, was designed to streamline operations and ensure the university's continued success and growth in the face of new challenges and opportunities.

Highlighting the critical role that departments such as Human Resources, Information and Communication Technology and Facilities Management play, the Vice-Chancellor stressed that a university's success hinges on its ability to foster an environment that empowers both students and staff to achieve academic excellence. He urged all staff members to see their daily responsibilities as integral to the broader mission of delivering high-quality education, research, and community engagement. Drawing a powerful analogy to the dedication of two women at National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the 1960s, who understood the larger purpose of their work in helping to land astronauts on the moon, the Vice-Chancellor reminded staff that every contribution, no matter how small, is vital to the university's mission.



The newly appointed Chief Operating Officer, Mr Botwe Kraziya addressing some of the senior members of his Division

Building a Vision for Collaboration and Success

As Mr Kraziya steps into his new role, his vision is rooted in fostering collaboration, building strong relationships, and driving continuous improvement. During his presentation to the departments he will oversee, Mr. Kraziya outlined the approach he plans to take as Chief Operating Officer. His focus is on aligning the university's operations with its academic goals, ensuring that each department operates as part of a cohesive, integrated system.

The COO, who previously served as the university's Chief Financial Officer (CFO), shared his deep appreciation for the complexity of higher education. "The science of higher education is very complicated," Mr. Kraziya remarked, recognising the multifaceted nature of university operations and the need for departments to work in harmony. His approach to leadership, he explained, is grounded in his commitment to understanding the intricacies of each department's role in the larger ecosystem of the university. "I have to learn those skills. I have to understand how all of those different areas of the university come together," he said.

Fostering Strong Relationships and Teamwork

Central to Mr Kraziya's philosophy is the belief that no success is achieved alone. He emphasised the importance of teamwork and the role of building strong, genuine relationships with colleagues. "To be able to run and be able to make it a success, really relies on you choosing the right team," he noted. Reflecting on his success in the CFO role, he attributed much of his effectiveness to the relationships he built with colleagues across the university.

Mr Kraziya explained that building relationships is not about attending social events or "networking" for the sake of it. Rather, it is about forging meaningful connections with those who can make a tangible difference in one's work. "It's about having conversations with people who can make a positive difference in the job that you do," he explained. He is committed to collaborating with colleagues who will help turn ideas into actionable results.

A Commitment to Thought Leadership and Continuous Improvement

As a leader, Mr. Kraziya places a high value on thought leadership and continuously evaluating how processes can be improved. Reflecting on his own academic journey, he noted how his early experiences shaped his approach to leadership, particularly his desire to challenge the status quo. "I remember when I started my master's degree, I was one of these people... we should go and do this right," he shared. This mindset influences his leadership style, which is focused on constant improvement, whether through better resource management or addressing leadership challenges. Mr Kraziya stressed that his commitment to improvement is not just about introducing innovative ideas, but also about refining and strengthening existing processes. His goal is to create an environment where the university continually evaluates and enhances its operations, striving for excellence in every area.

A Deep Commitment to Excellence and Accountability

For Mr Kraziya, excellence is not just a goal but a guiding principle. "I think about what I do a lot, and I take what I do very seriously," he said. His meticulous approach ensures that no detail is overlooked in the pursuit of positive outcomes. While he acknowledges that his high standards may sometimes be perceived as "extra," he believes that every decision must be intentional, aimed at driving the university toward greater success.

He also welcomes feedback, recognising that his thoroughness may already have been experienced by colleagues. However, he remains confident that his dedication to high standards will lead to positive, long-term results for the university.

Looking Ahead: A Vision for Operational Excellence and Innovation

Looking to the future, Mr Kraziya has outlined a clear strategy for the university's operational framework, with an emphasis on innovation, efficiency, and stakeholder engagement. Key priorities include improving the student experience, driving operational excellence, fostering a culture of innovation, and enhancing communication both within the university and with external stakeholders. He also highlighted several areas in which he plans to focus his efforts, including improving Human Resources processes, enhancing facilities and maintenance operations, and driving the development of a more functional website to better represent the university. Moreover, Mr Kraziya intends to streamline recruitment processes and strengthen leadership and team alignment within Human Resources.

With a focus on upskilling teams, driving innovation, and implementing effective project management, Mr. Kraziya aims to elevate the university's public image, foster stronger relationships with alumni, and encourage greater participation in academic conferences and awards.

A Leader Poised to Drive Positive Change

As Mr Kraziya embarks on his leadership journey as COO, his focus on collaboration, leadership, and operational excellence provides a strong foundation for the university's continued success. His dedication to creating positive change, building relationships, and driving continuous improvement will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in ensuring that the university achieves its mission of producing globally relevant and competitive graduates. With a shared commitment to excellence, the university community is poised to thrive under the COO's leadership, fostering a successful educational environment for students, staff, and stakeholders alike.



Pir Sabnam: A Beacon of Excellence and Empowering Others Through Education



In the heart of the Faculty of Management, Commerce, and Law at the University of Venda, in the Department of Business Information Systems, a young student has emerged as a shining star. Pir Sabnam, a third-year BCom Business Information Systems (BIS) student, whose education focuses on the intersection of business and technology, of business and technology, preparing her to effectively contribute to the field, stands as a testament to perseverance, dedication, and the power of a dream. Her journey from navigating complex academic challenges to becoming the Best Overall student of the Vice-Chancellor's Student

Academic Excellence Awards at the university is nothing short of inspiring.

Overcoming Academic Hurdles

Every success story has its trials, and for Pir, the second year of her academic journey presented a formidable challenge. A complex systems analysis project tested her limits, requiring a deep understanding of advanced technical concepts and their seamless integration into functional designs. The daunting scope of the project, coupled with tight deadlines, seemed almost insurmountable.

But Pir tackled it head-on. She broke down

the overwhelming task into manageable pieces, sought guidance from her lecturers and peers, and invested extra hours mastering system design and data analysis. Her participation in study groups proved invaluable, transforming confusion into clarity and helping her thrive in a collaborative environment.

"I realised that success lies not just in understanding the material but in systematically solving problems and managing time effectively," she reflected. This approach not only helped her overcome the project but also equipped her with lifelong skills in teamwork, discipline, and problem-solving.

The Pillars of Success

Pir's achievements stem from a blend of hard work, effective time management, and a balanced approach to life. Her meticulous schedules ensured she could excel academically while also nurturing her mental and physical well-being.

"Discipline and balance have been key," she shared. "I make time for my studies, self-care, and even moments of relaxation. Success, I believe, is a product of harmony in life."

Her resilience is fuelled by the support of her family, particularly her father, who has been her greatest inspiration. "Despite our financial struggles, my family's belief in me keeps me going. They've sacrificed so much, and I want to make them proud," she says with heartfelt gratitude.

A Vision for the Future

For Pir, success is not just about personal achievements but also about giving back. She said her ultimate goal is to create opportunities for underprivileged students, ensuring that financial or social barriers do not hinder their dreams. Her aspiration to bridge the gap between business and technology is matched by her desire to uplift others and contribute to the community.

Words of Wisdom

Pir's advice to her peers and aspiring

students is simple yet profound: "Persevere through challenges. Remember your family's sacrifices and let their support inspire you. Your books are your friends—they'll guide you to your dreams. With hard work and faith, you can overcome anything."

A Heartfelt Thank You

As Pir reflected on her journey, she extended her warmest gratitude to those who stood by her side. From her lecturers and classmates to her family, she acknowledged the pivotal role they played in her success. And thanked her parents, especially her father, for believing in her for their unwavering support.

"Primarily, I attribute the majority of my achievements to my mother, whose steadfast prayers have been a constant source of strength. The very reason I stand before you on this stage today is due to her unwavering support. Without her prayers, I would not be the person I am today. She selflessly sacrificed her time, often staying awake through the night to accompany me during my studies, as I feared studying alone. Her boundless love and unwavering support have been my greatest pillars, and I owe all my success to her," she expressed.

She cited that everyone must remember that prayers have the power to work wonders. She firmly believes in the strength of prayer, and she is a living testament to its profound impact. She specifically, mentioned a mother's prayers can never be overlooked; they are always heard and the love and devotion a mother put into her prayers are unmatched, and they serve as an unwavering source of guidance and protection. Pir expressed she will be forever grateful for the blessings she's received, all of which are a result of the countless prayers of her mother that her faith and devotion have shaped her path, and she carries that with her everyday.

Pir Sabnam's story is not just about academic success but about resilience, gratitude, and a vision to make a difference. She is not just a student but a beacon of hope and excellence and an inspiration for everyone around her.

A UNIVEN PhD candidate makes a mark in the improvement of Public Health in Southern Africa

Ms Mukovhe Rammela, a dynamic and driven Public Health advocate, is making significant strides in the field of public health while completing her final year of PhD studies at the University of Venda (UNIVEN). With a passion for advancing health outcomes in Southern Africa, Ms Rammela's contributions are already leaving a lasting impact.

As an active member of the editorial team for the international Young Social Worker Network Newsletter (YSWN), Ms Rammela has showcased her writing and analytical skills. The YSWN is a platform that features young writers from Southern African nations such as Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, and South Africa, who share their insights on a range of social issues, including public health. Her involvement in this initiative highlights her dedication to sharing knowledge and fostering collaboration across the region.

With over eight years of hands-on experience in the public health sector, Ms Rammela has become a seasoned professional. Her expertise spans critical areas, including HIV/TB care, the improvement of health services, and the strengthening of health systems. She has proven her leadership through successful project management and the implementation of health programmes across various districts in South Africa. In addition, her work in mentoring, training, and capacity-building has been invaluable in improving service delivery and contributing to positive health outcomes within communities.

Ms Rammela's academic and research pursuits have also led to significant contributions to public health literature. She has already published an article in a peer-reviewed journal focusing on improving universal access to reproductive healthcare services. The article highlights

the importance of integrating and expanding services such as contraception, HIV testing, and oral Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), while ensuring the unique needs of young and adolescent populations are met. Her research has been presented at various conferences, where she has shared her findings with fellow public health experts, fostering collaboration and advancing the field.

Among her many achievements, Ms Rammela has worked on key health programmes such as TB/ HIV and STI management, with particular emphasis on vulnerable populations like sex workers and drug users. Her extensive skill set in strategic leadership, research, and capacity-building has made her an indispensable contributor to public health improvement in Southern Africa. As she nears the completion of her PhD, Ms Rammela is poised to continue making meaningful contributions to the region's public health landscape.



Driving Change Through Golf: University of Venda's Tournament Success

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) is redefining the role of sport in higher education by using its annual winter and summer golf tournaments as a platform for social impact. These events, designed to raise funds for academically talented yet financially disadvantaged students, are much more than just opportunities to play golf—they are about creating pathways to success and transforming the lives of those who need it most.

Between 2022 and 2024, these tournaments raised an extraordinary R920 000, a milestone that directly helped 64 students, ensuring they receive their degree certificates. Looking ahead to 2025, UNIVEN is taking its commitment even further, aiming to support over 80 students with outstanding debts, allowing them to receive their degree certificates upon graduation. The next golf tournament, set for July 2025, will be another opportunity to elevate these transformative efforts.

Currently, 434 graduates still owe the university and have not yet received their degree certificates, with a total outstanding amount of R21,831,360. We aim to reduce this debt through the upcoming Winter and Summer golf tournaments.

Empowering the Future: Education Without Barriers

The funds raised through these tournaments play a pivotal role in enabling students to pursue their dreams, regardless of their financial circumstances. Each year, financial assistance is given to academically gifted individuals who would otherwise be unable to complete their studies. This financial assistance is not just financial aid—it is an investment in the future, helping to build the next generation of leaders, innovators, and contributors to society.

Education is a powerful tool for change, and by removing financial obstacles, UNIVEN ensures that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to make a meaningful impact on their communities and beyond.

Building Partnerships: A Collective Vision

The golf tournaments are more than a source of funding—they are an avenue for UNIVEN to build and strengthen partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including alumni, corporate sponsors, and community leaders. These events bring together those who share the university's vision of empowering students through education.

Corporate sponsors and donors play a critical role in the success of these initiatives. Their support not only helps raise essential funds but also fosters collaboration between



the public and private sectors to address some of higher education's most pressing challenges. These partnerships highlight the importance of a collective approach in overcoming financial barriers and creating a more inclusive education system.

Beyond Fundraising: Networking, Collaboration, and Community Building

While the tournaments are designed to raise funds, they also serve as vibrant networking hubs where individuals from various sectors can come together for a common cause. Participants enjoy the camaraderie of the sport while making a lasting impact on the lives of students. This blend of sport, philanthropy, and community building is a testament to UNIVEN's innovative approach to addressing financial challenges in education.

These events also offer an opportunity for participants to connect with others who are passionate about making a difference. The shared experience of supporting students' academic journeys creates lasting bonds, turning every swing of the club into a step towards a brighter future for all.

Looking Ahead: Expanding Impact, Expanding Opportunities

This initiative is particularly significant, as it tackles a critical issue faced by many graduates in South Africa: the inability to receive their degree certificates due to outstanding fees. By ensuring that these students can obtain their certificates, UNIVEN

is opening doors to career opportunities that would otherwise remain closed, allowing graduates to enter the workforce and contribute to the economy.

Through these efforts, UNIVEN is not just helping students overcome financial challenges; it is empowering them to unlock their full potential and achieve their professional goals.

A Future Shaped by Education and Community

The University of Venda's golf tournaments stand as a powerful reminder of the impact that community-driven initiatives can have on individuals and society. By harnessing the power of sport and philanthropy, UNIVEN is creating tangible change in the lives of its students—ensuring that financial constraints no longer stand in the way of academic success.

As UNIVEN continues to lead by example, it sends a clear message: investing in education is one of the most powerful ways to invest in the future. These golf tournaments are not just about hitting the perfect shot—they are about creating lasting opportunities and driving meaningful change, one student at a time.

In a world where access to education remains a critical challenge, UNIVEN's innovative approach is proof that, through collaboration and community spirit, we can create a more equitable and brighter future for all.

We would like to hear from you!

Nendila is your communication channel.

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