



University of Venda

MAY/JUNE 2013

Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

“We are investigating the midyear exam problems” – Prof Mbatl

Students protest over June 2013 examinations – where do we stand?

“An in-depth investigation has been instituted to uncover the reasons and circumstances that have led to the recent examination crisis,” says Univen’s Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatl.

“University management regrets the failure of the Examinations Section to adhere to the examination schedule for the first semester examination. All outstanding externally moderated papers have been rescheduled in consultation with students and deans to ensure that a fair chance was provided to students to write their examinations successfully.”

When students could not write midyear exams following the Examinations Sections failure to send the externally moderated papers to the external moderators on time, they blocked the university’s main entrance on Monday, 3 June.

Vice Chancellor and Principal Prof Peter Mbatl addressed students and received their demands.

On Tuesday, 4 June the situation went back to normal and the academic programme is running smoothly.



Students blocking Univen’s main gate. Photograph: Daily Sun - Armando Chikhudo.

Univen and University of the Free State work together

History was made when the Universities of Venda and Free State signed a memorandum of understanding at the QwaQwa campus of the University of the Free State recently.

It coincided with the University of the Free State’s 10-year celebration of a multi-campus system. As the Campus Principal of the QwaQwa Campus at the time of its incorporation into the University of the Free State, Univen’s Vice Chancellor and Principal Prof Peter Mbatl reflected on this critical period in the history of the campus.

“We oversaw infrastructure improvements and alignment of governance structures as well as academic reengineering exercises with the main campus in Bloemfontein, while negotiating the difficult trajectory caused by emotions aroused by the incorporation,” said Mbatl.

The memorandum of understanding further entrenches collaboration between the two universities. It entails student and staff exchanges and intensifies cooperative initiatives already underway in various fields, including research and development as well as capacity building.



Prof Mbatl reflects on the incorporation process.

Strengthening old ties – Univen Vice Chancellor and Principal Prof Peter Mbatl signs the memorandum of understanding with University of the Free State Vice Chancellor and Principal Prof Jonathan Jansen looking on.



Dr Choice Makhetha, University of the Free State Vice Rector External Relations, Prof Mbatl and Prof Jonathan Jansen, Vice Chancellor of the University of the Free State are about to sign the memorandum of understanding.

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1 600 students reap the fruit of hard work

More than 1 600 Univen students received their qualifications during Univen's autumn graduation ceremony recently.

The qualifications were conferred by the Chancellor of the University, Kgalema Motlanthe.

A total of 31 masters and eight PhD degrees were conferred. Recipients included Dr Takalani Samuel Mashau of the School of Education, Dr Madimabi Masebe and Dr Musie Mbulaiseni, both from the Department of Microbiology in the School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences as well as Dr Geoff Mapaya of the School of Human and Social Sciences.

Motlanthe congratulated student veteran, Mr Thulani Nenzhelele, who received his bachelor of Economics degree to a loud and cheerful audience. Nenzhelele who is affectionately known as Makenzo by most students, registered at Univen more than five years ago. After many years of his studies, Makenzo proved that nothing can stop a man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal.

"I am very excited that I finally completed my degree at this university. It was no easy walk. Some students gave up during the journey. I would like to encourage current students to be serious and never give up with their studies. Now I can show my parents that I have something valuable in my life," he said.

Ms Zorodzai Thamary Mhlanga received the Univen Agriculture Alumni Association award for the Best Overall student in the Schools of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, and y the Senate Medallion for the Best Overall student.



"Now I can show that I have something valuable in my life" - Makenzo.

The awards were sponsored by, among others, F&I Bridge Auto, Pick n Pay, the Univen Agriculture Alumni Association, Dr Makhwanya, Dr Nanagambi, Intellicard, ITS Holdings, Microsep, Neosho Trading 139, Capitec Bank and the Polokwane Alumni Chapter.

Fond memories for KHLim exchange students

Two exchange programme students of the Katholieke University College, Limburg in Belgium, Tim Vanherweghe and Lisane Vandormael, will be taking home fond memories following their tenure at Univen.

They were attached to the School of Education and engaged in work-integrated learning at Mboneni Primary School in Rambuda.

Teachers, parents and pupils were full of appreciation for what Tim and Lis have done for the school. Among others, they renovated the entire school, painted the classrooms and donated 300 plastic chairs - all from their own purse.

"These people have erased the negative notions about the 'makuwas'."

The Chiefs gave the school two cows to slaughter in honour of the outgoing student teachers. The traditional leadership, the circuit manager of the Department of Education, councillors, members of the school governing body and parents attended the farewell function.

"This is our first visit to Africa and we enjoyed our stay because of the warmth from the community members," said Tim and Lis.

"We will come to visit the school in the near future."

From Univen the two left for the Cape Peninsula University of Technology where they will spend four weeks in continuation of their exchange programme in South Africa.



"We will be back!" - from left: Lisane Vandormael, Mr Cornelius Hagenmeier, Univen's Director of International Relations and Tim Vanherweghe.

A line up of PhD graduates at the autumn graduation ceremony



Beata Kilonzo, Samuel Mashau and Obet Nethononda.



Tracy Masebe.



Geoff Mapaya.



Jeanette Mashaba-Ramakuela.

Mhlanga is the best!

Ms Mhlanga Thamary Zorodzai received a trophy for her performance as the best overall student from Chancellor Kgalema Motlanthe at the recent graduation ceremony.



PSL star among Univen's autumn graduates

Among the more than 1 600 Univen students who received their qualifications during the university's recent autumn graduation was former PSL star Mulondo Sikhwivhilu, who received a bachelor of environmental sciences degree.

The qualifications were conferred by Chancellor Kgalema Motlanthe.

Sikhwivhilu said it had always been his wish to complete his studies to prepare for life after soccer.

"It was painful to see that most former soccer stars are now penniless and some even taking ordinary jobs after a life of glory. I have come to realise that the soccer career is very short and that many have hit hard times after being in the limelight and leading a life of glamour. With education, one is secure for life and has something to fall back on when days are dark on the soccer field," he said.

He encouraged youngsters to take education seriously and not to rush to make a quick buck before securing their future.

"Education is the key that can open closed doors for a sportsman or artist. One must be able to read and understand contracts and also have somewhere to go when one's sporting career is over."

Sikhwivhilu played for, among others, Black Leopards, Orlando Pirates, Supersport United, Dynamos and Bay United.

In congratulating Sikhwivhilu, the Chief Whip of the Vhembe District Municipality, Councillor Tshifhiwa Dali, said he was an inspiration to the youth.

"The route he took is the right one that the youth should follow. Many of our players are buried paupers after glorious soccer careers because of a lack of education. We encourage others to follow in his footsteps."



Mulondo Sikhwivhilu (right) was the man of the moment when guests showered him with praises for having achieved his dream. Vhembe Chief Whip Councillor Tshifhiwa Dali (third from left), who encouraged him to go back to university, was one of the happy people who came to wish him well on his achievements.

Photograph: Zoutnet

Univen's Good Samaritan

Univen has staff members who need to be commended for their good performance.

On 7 May a panel from the South African Council of Social Services Professions visited the Univen campus. When departing, the leader of the panel, Registrar Ms Smith dropped her purse - with money and all cards - in the parking area.

During the evening, Ms Livhuwani Mudzanani, a security staff member on duty while patrolling, picked the purse up. She took it upon herself to investigate and delivered the purse to Ms Pinky Mukhuba in the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic. Smith was called and her purse was couriered to her.

Univen salutes Mudzanani for keeping the university's name high.



Univen's new fundraiser

Chris Windell is a relative newcomer to the staff of Univen as an advisor. He has a vast knowledge of fundraising and has been in this profession for more than 35 years.

Nendila spoke to Chris.

Nendila: Chris, you were appointed in August 2012. Your main job is to raise funds for various projects of the university. What has your experience been up to now?

Chris: Well, first of all I had to make an assessment of all the projects that were available on campus. Projects - meaning which of them are marketable to the corporate and private sectors.

I have visited all deans of faculties and a number of directors of schools. I must quickly add that when they hear what I am about to do their eyes shine of expectation, but I am quick to calm them down saying that it not always that easy.

Nendila: Have you come across some projects which you think are sellable?

Chris: There is so much potential on this campus. After several visits to campus I have come to the conclusion that there is a dire need for computers. Students complain that they sometimes have to wait more than two hours to get access to a computer.

Now, at any university this is unacceptable. So my first priority will be computers. Not to speak about bursaries. Then I have come across needs for the unit of disabled students, and infrastructure for a number of departments like the Health Clinic.

Nendila: What do you think about student life on campus?

Chris: You know, every time I come on campus I have talks with many students. I discovered that -

- our sport facilities are not up to standard and we are working on that.
- I want to see more inter-residential competitions on sports and cultural level.
- I think on all sport levels we must be more competitive
- only recently there was the inter-university athletic competition. Only eight universities took part. My question is...do we not have 800, 1 500, 5 000, 10 000 meters athletes? I sincerely think we have. So we have to identify them, give proper training and let them take part...even if it is individually. In the next two years we must see the names of Univen athletes on the TV screen. And, I know they are there.

Nendila: So, Chris, it seems to us that you have high hopes for Univen?

Chris: Without question. But, it stands to reason that I need the assistance of not only the vice chancellor but all staff members ... and students ... because we are one team representing the University of Venda.



Birth supporter study in Vhembe District – born at Univen

The Univen campus recently co-hosted a workshop with the University of British Columbia in Canada and the Harvard University in the USA to discuss the establishment of a birth cohort in the Vhembe District.

Dr David Speert, a paediatrician and a specialist in infectious diseases at the University of British Columbia secured funding for the meeting from a private donor through the British Columbia Children's Hospital Foundation.

Welcoming the guests, Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbatlali expressed his excitement about the international interest in the region.

"I whole-heartedly support the project, the first building blocks towards a deeper relationship between the participating universities."

Participants in the workshop included Dr Michelle Williams, Chair of Epidemiology at Harvard University, Dr Ben Marais, Sydney Medical School, Dr Kristopher Kang, University of British Columbia and Dr Ashley Roberts, University of British Columbia.

Univen's participants included the Dean of Health Sciences, Prof Khoza, the Dean of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Prof Crafford as well as various senior academics including Profs Bessong and Netshandama and Drs Maluleke and Samie.

The Vhembe District Health Department supported the event through expediting all necessary approvals, releasing its managers to engage with the academics and sharing valuable contextual information.

The scientific team, which hailed from universities on three continents, embarked on field excursions and engaged with representatives of the Vhembe District and the Department of Health and Traditional leadership to gain understanding of the health systems in the district. Among other places, the Donald Fraser Hospital and the Rambuda Clinic were visited.



Engagement with the local community - The focus of academic engagement with local communities was top of mind during the workshop.

A degree in Disaster Risk Sciences on the cards

The School of Environmental Sciences is spearheading collaboration between Univen and the Department of Cooperative Governance to implement a new degree programme in Disaster Risk Sciences.

At a recent workshop, Univen's Professors Odiyo and Ogola, Mr Tau of the department and Mr Moja of the Limpopo Provincial Management Centre explained the need for a disaster risk management programme in South Africa, with emphasis on the Limpopo Province.

Discussions about the development of a business case, curriculum development and implementation for the Bachelor of Disaster Risk Sciences degree were the order of the day.

Univen will develop the curriculum for the degree, with the development of short courses targeting councillors, traditional leaders and disaster risk management practitioners another possibility. The department will investigate funding of the programmes.



The team investigating the introduction of a degree in Disaster Risk Sciences.

The Absa-Univen soccer league kicks off

The Absa-Univen soccer league was officially launched recently. Officially opened by Univen's Director of Student Affairs, Rev Thivhilaeli Nedohe, the launch was attended by Absa officials, sponsors Powerade and Coca-Cola, Student Representative Council President Andisani Mathelemusa, student affairs staff members and students.

"A sustainable culture of sport enables the development, restoration and transformation of the community to achieve a peaceful co-existence among students and staff," said Nedohe. "The launch will foster a spirit of participation in various sporting activities - sport celebrates a healthy lifestyle." Mathelemusa said that participation in sport improves academic performance excellence and creates a better life for all.



SRC President Andisani Mathelemusa and Univen's Director of Student Affairs, Rev Thivhilaeli shared the podium at the Absa-Univen soccer league launch.

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Welcome! New Univen interns

38 Interns from the Department of Science and Technology and the National Research Foundation recently joined Univen for a 12-month internship orientation programme.

They are based in various academic departments like Botany, Hydrology, Urban and Regional Planning, Psychology, Nutrition, Environmental Health, Sports, the Centre for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation, Food Science and Technology, Animal Sciences and Information Technology Services.

Univen's Director of Human Resources, Mr Tshililo Manenzhe welcomed the interns, while the Director, Mr Manenzhe said the orientation helps to reduce anxiety that results from entering into unknown situations.

"We trust that it will provide guidelines for behaviour and conduct in the form of conditions of service. We want you to feel welcome and help create a positive attitude and a favourable impression about the university."



Entering the world of work – 38 interns recently joined Univen.

ICAD – a tool for decision-making launched

An integrated and coordinated agrarian land use decision making tool - ICAD for short – was launched recently.

Developed by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Univen's Institute for Rural Development, the Nkuzi Development Association and the Vhembe District Municipality, the ICAD is a simulation game with a manual in both English and Tshivenda. The ICAD was developed, piloted and validated over three years, engaging four community property associations in the Makhado Municipality.

It is intended for use by community-level decision makers and farmers to help eliminate fragmented and uncoordinated decision-making in the use and management of land in rural areas, particularly in restitution areas.

A key feature of the ICAD is the identification and participation of a wide range of stakeholders, including people potentially affected by the proposed land use. Environmental, social and economic impacts of proposed land use are also identified and decisions on how to mitigate any detrimental effects made before implementation is rolled out.

"The timely birth of the ICAD is paramount, taking into account the need for prudent management of land and the environment in the quest for better livelihoods," says Univen's Deputy Dean of the School of Agriculture, Prof Jude Odhiambo.

"Quite often, decision-making mainly focuses on meeting immediate livelihood needs with little or no consideration of the impact on the environment," says the CSIR's Ms Miriam Murambadoro.

"This results in unsustainable land-based livelihood practices. Agrarian land had to be multifunctional and is commonly used for various activities, including agriculture, tourism, conservation and

forestry. In this regard, there is a need to think about the sustainability of the rural landscapes and how they are impacted by decisions on activities such as initiating crop or livestock enterprises,

clearing land for agriculture, setting land aside for eco-tourism activities and introducing livestock in areas not previously used for grazing. Thus, the birth of the ICAD and its subsequent adoption

by the intended beneficiaries might ensure that sustainability of rural landscapes receives more serious consideration than ever before when decisions are made," she says.



Stakeholders testing the ability of the ICAD.



Debating the way forward for higher education in South Africa – in Thohoyandou.

HEMIS gathers in Thohoyandou

The South African Association of the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) came together in Thohoyandou recently.

The association's Executive Member, Mr Herman Vissser said this was an opportunity to explain the nature and scope of the South African higher education management system.

"HEMIS is crucial in providing information for systematic planning purposes - information used to provide information for research purposes."

Univen's Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Prof Xhikombiso Mbhenyane said that institutions would get better subsidy based on what they offer.

"Course targets should be determined correctly without manipulating data."

The workshop was attended by deans of schools, academic administration, heads of departments and universities across the country.

Univen postgrads learn about fellowship possibilities

The Foundation for Professional Development presented Univen postgraduate students with fellowship possibilities recently.

In cooperation with the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and AIDS service organisations, the foundation gives young, skilled individuals with masters level education the opportunity to make a substantial difference in South African health care.

Applicants must be South African or permanent residents with a South African ID, must have completed a masters degree or have completed 60 to 80 percent of their course work. The fellowships are full-time for one year.

The presentation was attended by academic staff from different schools.



Why state intervention is needed in our universities - Minister of Higher Education and Training

The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande says for some institutions 'autonomy' is more important than the right of students and staff to be protected from unfair discrimination.

Delivering the Centre for Education Policy Development's Solomon Mahlangu lecture recently, Nzimande said higher education has a crucially important role in contributing to South Africa's national development goals and transforming the country for the benefit of all of its people and not just of a minority.

"The work universities do is vital to ensuring that we develop citizens who are able to live in and contribute to a productive, well-functioning and relatively contented society.

"Universities should also see themselves as an important component of the post-school education and training system, a system that includes colleges, adult education institutions, regulatory bodies, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and workplaces in which training takes place. Universities should not only train educators and managers for the other post-school institutions, but also seek to develop different types of collaborative partnerships with them.

"What are the main development challenges at the current stage of our history and what should be the role of universities in meeting them?"

"I believe that South Africa's most important objective at present is to overcome the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality. To do this we need to grow our economy. I refer

here not only to the formal economy that must grow and absorb millions more into relatively secure employment. But we must also recognise that millions of our people are still make a living outside the formal economy and that this situation is likely to continue for years before the informal economy shrinks enough to become irrelevant.

"Democracy has of course benefited all South Africans to some extent and provided formal, legal and political rights. A significant number have benefitted economically. However, the truth is that for millions of people - the urban and rural poor - a lot more still needs to be done despite huge improvements brought by the government.

"When we think of transforming universities we need to think about the entire university system and not just of individual institutions. Although we have made some progress towards the transformation of higher education, probably our biggest failure since 1994 has been our failure to ensure that the historically black universities, especially the rural, former bantustan universities are given significantly more resources and investment in improvement of infrastructure, governance and quality.

"The main reason that my ministry is taking action such as establishing the Oversight Committee or amending the Higher Education Act, is to increase the capacity of the state to intervene to ensure that the interests of citizens and students, and especially those from less empowered sections of the society, are prioritised. In the same way, I believe, most critical voices come from those groups that want to reduce the role of the state, not only in education but in all aspects of our society.

"Whilst we seek to transform the system as a whole it is important that institutional mobilisation is intensified, except it must not be violent and destroy property. It must be progressive mobilisation to confront racism, sexism, unfair discrimination, against 'sex for marks' practices."

The minister said the state is not the only actor that promotes transformation.

"Our government seeks to cooperate with various social groups and organisations that share its agenda of transforming South African society and also to engage others to see where we can find common ground. We really believe that 'Together, we can do more'.

"And while we believe that there must obviously be limits on the powers of the state, we resist those who wish to see the state reduced to a protector of the status quo that is reluctant to intervene decisively in the interests of most of those who have struggled for the freedom that we now enjoy."



A new registrar for Univen

Prof Edward Nesamvuni has been appointed as University Registrar.

Nesamvuni is a professor in the field of agriculture and has a passion for human development.

He has been an academic for 24 years with his most recent full-time academic position as Professor and the head of the department of the Centre for Rural Community Empowerment at the University of Limpopo.

He serves as Professor Extra-ordinary at the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of the Free State and part-time professor for Research Supervision at the University of South Africa.

From 1996 to 2003 he was Associate Professor and Director for the Centre for Rural Development, the Head of the Department of Animal Science, the Deputy Dean and Dean of the School of Agriculture, Rural Development and Forestry at the University of Venda. He was appointed Director of Human Capital at the Department of Science and Technology in 2004.

Nesamvuni also worked in provincial government from 2005 to 2012 as the Director: Research and Extension, the General Manager: Research and Training and the Deputy Director-General of the Limpopo Department of Agriculture.

He served as an executive member of the National Agricultural Education and Training Forum for three years and was also a member of the South African Agricultural Research Council for seven years from 1997 to 2003.



He has supervised 16 Masters and four Doctoral students, and is the author/ co-author of more than 94 papers, including journal articles, abstracts, monographs, reports and book chapters.

Nesamvuni's fields of specialisation include livestock production systems, human capital development and planning, rural development and agricultural policy.

He is a member of the International Third World Leadership Association, the South African Society of Animal Science, the South African Society of Agricultural Extension and the Grassland Society of Southern Africa.

He is registered as a Professional Natural Scientist by the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions.

"We welcome the appointment of Prof Nesamvuni and look forward to his contribution to the development of the university," said Univen's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Peter Mbat.

We would like to hear from you!

Nendila is your communications channel.

Nendila editorial committee –
Mr Takalani Dzaga – Chief editor
Ms Welheminah Mabogo – Coordinator
Ms Bevely Dube – Media expert
Ms Mushoni Mulaudzi – Preservation (Library)

Send your contributions to:

Welheminah Mabogo
Nendila Coordinator
University of Venda
Private Bag X5050
Thohoyandou, 0950
Tel 015 962 8525
Fax 015 962 8494
e-mail
welheminah.mabogo@univen.ac.za
Office number 24, first floor
Main administration block

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus – contact the tip-off hotline - 0800 212 755, e-mail univenhotline@tip-offs.com