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2026 REPOSITIONING
- THE INSTITUTIONAL FORUM -
as a catalyst for TRANSFORMATION in the higher education sector

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Repositioning the Institutional Forum (IF) as a catalyst for transformation in the higher education sector

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The University of Limpopo, through its Institutional Forum, invites Institutional Forum Chairpersons, members and sector stakeholders to a high-level national summit focused on strengthening the role of Institutional Forums in transformation, inclusive governance and institutional renewal.

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WHAT TO EXPECT

- High-level dialogue on the statutory and policy role of Institutional Forums.
- Discussion on transformation, race and gender equity, dignity, inclusion and human rights.
- Peer learning and sector collaboration among universities and key stakeholders.
- Action-oriented resolutions, a Summit Declaration and implementation priorities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT :

Registration, payment, cancellation and substitution enquiries should be directed to:
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Opinion Pieces

UL alumni honour the Professor Yadavalli who shaped them



Former Statistics students reunite to celebrate their mentor and former lecturer, Professor V. Sarma Yadavalli, who headed UL's Department of Statistics and Operations Research from 1995 to 1996.

Graduates of the University of Limpopo (UL), then the University of the North, who now hold senior positions at Statistics South Africa and Telkom, among others, gathered in Pretoria recently to honour Professor V.S. Sarma Yadavalli – the internationally recognised scholar who led UL's Department of Statistics and Operations Research from 1995 to 1996 and set many of them on the path to leadership.

Professor Yadavalli's research covers mathematical and stochastic modelling towards operations research, reliability engineering, and inventory management. He has published over 225 peer-reviewed papers and supervised more than 50 postgraduate students (diverse backgrounds). One of them, Dr Patrick Sekgoka, received an award for his doctoral project in data science and complex network modelling at the University of Pretoria. His two other students received S2A3 medals from the University of Pretoria.

His honours include the following:

- The Kris Adendorff Award for Most Prominent Industrial Engineering Professional: Presented by the Southern African Institute for Industrial Engineering (SAIIE).
- Most Outstanding Researcher: Recognising his significant academic research and publications from the Southern African Institute for Industrial Engineering.
- Lifetime Achievement Award: Granted by the Society for Quality, Reliability and Operations Management in December 2006 from the Society for Quality, Reliability and Operations Management, Delhi for his pioneering contributions to industrial engineering and reliability theory.
- IEOM Distinguished Educator Award from the Industrial Engineering and Operations Management Society, USA in recognition of Outstanding Lifelong Service and Dedication to Education and Outstanding Support and Service.
- The Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM) silver medal and certificate: For co-authoring innovative stochastic simulation models for the South African mining industry.
- Fellow of South African Statistical Association, Fellow of Industrial Engineering and Operations Management, USA; Fellow of Southern African Institute of Industrial Engineers.
- B rated NRF Scientist.
- Former President of the Operations Research Society of South Africa.



Professor V.S. Sarma Yadavalli, who headed UL's Department of Statistics & Operations Research from 1995 to 1996.

For his former students, however, the reunion was about more than academic achievements. It was an opportunity to thank a lecturer whose guidance helped many build successful careers.

Tshepo Pekane, a 1995 UL BSc Mathematical Sciences graduate and Director of Data Analysis and Output at Statistics South Africa, described the reunion as a special chance to reconnect with former classmates and their professor.

Dr Reshoketswe Mokobane, also a 1995 BSc Mathematical Sciences graduate and a Council Member of Statistics South Africa, recalled the confidence Professor Yadavalli instilled in his students.

"He believed in us when it mattered the most, and he gave us distinct career ladders to climb to our destinies today," she said.

Thandi Makale, a 1996 UL Statistics Honours graduate and Director of Change Management and Service Delivery Improvement at Statistics South Africa, said she was pleased to see former classmates progressing into leadership positions, with some earning doctoral degrees.

"The pride on our professor's face was unmistakable, seeing that the seeds he sowed decades ago have borne fruit. I left encouraged, grateful and blessed to have been part of that journey," she said.

Dr Sekgoka recalled how Professor Yadavalli began mentoring "me when I was 20. Our conversations often returned to statistics lectures and former classmates. I also remembered his dedication to teaching four of the seven Statistics Honours modules without complaining about the workload."

Professor Yadavalli described the reunion as one of the best days of his life.

"You all brought back the sweet memories of the past. I felt honoured," he said.

Written by Dr Patrick Sekgoka, a 1995 UL BSc graduate in Mathematical Sciences, and Executive of Data Science and CVM at Telkom.

"He believed in us when it mattered the most, and he gave us distinct career ladders to climb to our destinies today."



Submit your opinions, views or letters to the editor at mar-comm@ul.ac.za

The opinions expressed in published letters are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publication or the University of Limpopo.

The editor reserves the right to edit submissions to fit the allocated space.

Sebayeng village goes online as UL computer lab opens doors to learning and jobs

Through its community engagement initiatives, the University of Limpopo has opened a computer laboratory at Tiangmaatla Multipurpose Centre, giving learners and young people access to online learning, applications to higher education institutions and job opportunities

By Maite Mamabolo – maite.mamabolo@ul.ac.za



Photos
Lebogang Mathaba

The University of Limpopo officially opens a computer laboratory at Sebayeng Tiangmaatla Multipurpose Centre, providing the wider community with access to digital learning, computer skills development and online opportunities.

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For many learners and job seekers in Sebayeng, getting online once meant long journeys and money they could not spare. Now the University of Limpopo (UL), through its DIMAMO Population Health Research Centre (PHRC), has opened a computer laboratory at the Tiangmaatla Multipurpose Centre, where residents can do homework, apply to universities and TVET colleges, access NSFAS funding, prepare CVs and search for jobs

The facility provides learners, young people and the wider community with access to digital learning, educational resources, job applications and health information.

The laboratory also marks a gesture of appreciation to communities that have supported DIMAMO PHRC for three decades.

Since 1995, families in Dikgale, Mamabolo and Mothiba have welcomed DIMAMO PHRC fieldworkers into their homes and shared information about their lives and health journeys.

Solomon Choma of DIMAMO PHRC said the laboratory was a way of giving back.

"This computer laboratory is our way of thanking communities that have supported us since 1995," he said.

The facility is expected to help learners with their homework, online research, typing skills and access to past examination papers. It will also support young people and job seekers with CV preparation, email and applications to universities, TVET colleges and NSFAS.

Ngoako Modjadji, a pupil at Solomondale Primary School, said the facility would support learners with schoolwork.

"It will help us search for information for our schoolwork and learn how to use computers," she said.

Karabo Mafokwane of Mafolofolo Secondary School said the laboratory would make applying to institutions of higher learning easier. "It will help us apply to universities online without travelling long distances," she said.

The centre is also expected to offer digital literacy training and free community access, while supporting workshops, presentations and small businesses seeking to use online platforms.

The laboratory will further provide access to health information, complementing DIMAMO PHRC's work in the community.

The project was made possible through the support of stakeholders, the tribal authority, community members and the teams involved in establishing the facility.

The facility is anticipated to help learners with their homework, online research, typing skills and access to past examination papers.

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DHET reviews UL's campus upgrades and clinical training

Two-day monitoring visit reviews infrastructure projects, student and staff development, support services, and clinical training at the University of Limpopo

By Thabiseng Ngobeni – Thabiseng.ngobeni@ul.ac.za









Photos
Frans Nkhapele

A delegation from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the University of Limpopo (UL) visits various university projects funded through the Sibusiso Bengu Development Grant (SBDG) and the Clinical Training Grant (CTG) to assess progress.

Upgraded laboratories for five health sciences programmes, enhanced campus security and expanded support for students with disabilities were among the University of Limpopo's (UL) grant-funded projects showcased during a two-day visit by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to review progress on the Sibusiso Bengu Development Grant (SBDG) and Clinical Training Grant (CTG)

The university's delegation was led by Shiba Diketane, Director of the Development Grants Management Office (DGMO) in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.

The SBDG plays a critical role in empowering historically disadvantaged institutions by providing essential funding for infrastructure, safety and security enhancement, information and communications technology (ICT) upgrades, governance, research, and teaching and learning.

At UL, projects under the current phase SBDG initiatives encompass key infrastructure and institutional development projects, including major upgrades to Gate 1 and the perimeter security wall, support for the Reakgona Disability Centre, postgraduate innovation and development, the Centre for Student Counselling and Development, ICT business intelligence, digital transformation, entrepreneurship development, technology transfer and human resource talent development.

The Department also supports the development of 4,500-bed student accommodation through its Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant and community engagement projects, including initiatives aimed at supporting local schools through the SBDP/G.

The Clinical Training Grant funds student support, laboratory equipment and staff in five programmes: Medicine, Optometry, Pharmacy, Nursing Science, and Human Nutrition and Dietetics.

Highlighting the purpose of the engagement, Diketane explained that the visit was intended to monitor implementation of the various projects supported through the Department's earmarked grants, the use of the grants and ensure that projects complied with DHET grant requirements.

"The focus is to strengthen compliance with the guidelines and ensure that these programmes support the university's transformation priorities, including student access and success, research and innovation capacity development, teaching and learning, and community engagement, among others," he stated



Shiba Diketane, Director of the Development Grants Management Office at UL.

He added that most of the projects were intended to strengthen the systems supporting the university's core functions.

"The visit has been instrumental in helping the office and the university improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation across the university," he said.

Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Professor Mamare Bopape, noted that CTG funding had helped equip laboratories for practical training and teaching.

"The equipment allows our students to undertake practical work and supports clinical training across five programmes. We are grateful for the funding, which is helping us upgrade our facilities and enhance the quality of training," she said.

Prof Bopape added that regular oversight monitoring visits provided an opportunity to assess progress, identify shortcomings and refine future institutional planning.

"The visit has been instrumental in helping the office and the university improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation across the university."

Professor Hector Chikoore elected Fellow of the Society of South African Geographers

The University of Limpopo climatologist joins an esteemed group of geographers recognised for outstanding scholarship in the sector

By Staff Reporters – ulpublications@ul.ac.za



Professor Hector Chikoore (fourth from left), recipient of the Society of South African Geographers Fellowship, with colleagues at the 2026 SSAG Biennial Conference in Mbombela.

University of Limpopo (UL) climatologist Professor Hector Chikoore has been elected a Fellow of the Society of South African Geographers (SSAG), one of the Society's highest honours, in recognition of research that helps Southern Africa prepare for droughts, floods, tropical cyclones and heatwaves

The Fellowship is awarded in recognition of outstanding scholarly contributions that advance Geography, alongside contributions to teaching, postgraduate training, editorial work and professional service. Prof Chikoore's nomination was endorsed by the SSAG Council, with the award formally presented at the Society's 2026 Biennial Conference at the University of Mpumalanga in Mbombela recently.

Reflecting on the recognition, Prof Chikoore remarked: "I am deeply honoured to receive this Fellowship from the SSAG. This recognition is particularly meaningful because it comes from the national geographical community and reflects a journey shaped by many years of research, teaching, postgraduate supervision and service to the discipline."

Prof Chikoore's research focuses extensively on weather and climate dynamics, including droughts, floods, tropical cyclones, heatwaves and other extreme weather events across Southern Africa. Through his scholarly research, he aims to enhance understanding of climate risks and contribute to disaster risk reduction, environmental policy and community resilience across Southern Africa.

He has published 74 peer-reviewed journal articles and accumulated approximately 2,000 citations, achieving an h-index of 25. He has also supervised 47 master's and doctoral graduates and holds an NRF C2 rating as an Established Researcher for the 2025–2030 period.

His research seeks to examine how climate information can support decision-making in agriculture, water security and disaster management. Among his recent contributions is a co-authored paper published in Nature Reviews Earth & Environment in 2025, which examined the impacts of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation in Africa.



The Fellowship awarded to Professor Hector Chikoore by the Society of South African Geographers.

A trained meteorologist, Prof Chikoore completed World Meteorological Organisation Class I Meteorologist training at the Bureau of Meteorology in Australia before working in operational meteorology in Zimbabwe. He transitioned into academia in 2008, earned a PhD in Synoptic Climatology from the University of Zululand and joined UL as a full professor in 2022.

His contribution extends beyond research and teaching. He is Vice-President of the South African Society for Atmospheric Sciences for the 2026–2029 term, serves on the editorial board of Discover Atmosphere and holds a Professor Extraordinarius appointment at the University of South Africa.

Dr Izelque Botha, Head of the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at UL, highlighted the importance of the award, noting that Prof Chikoore's election was a significant recognition of his contribution to Geography in South Africa and beyond.

"As a Department, we are particularly proud of the impact of his scholarship, but also of his commitment to postgraduate supervision, mentorship and the development of the next generation of geographers and climate scientists," Dr Botha said.

Prof Chikoore also expressed his gratitude to the people who have contributed to his work, including colleagues, students and research collaborators.

"I am grateful to the colleagues, students and collaborators who have been part of this journey, and to UL for providing an environment in which our research can continue to grow and contribute to addressing pressing climate and environmental challenges in South Africa and beyond," he added.

The Fellowship also carries honorary lifetime membership of the Society.

"This recognition is particularly meaningful because it comes from the national geographical community and reflects a journey shaped by many years of research, teaching, postgraduate supervision and service to the discipline."

Artists with disabilities take centre stage at UL festival

The festival brought together artists, students and the community to celebrate talent, promote inclusion in the arts and challenge barriers in the creative industry

By Jostinah Mamabolo – makgano.mamabolo@ul.ac.za









Photos
Desmond Maluleke

Artists with disabilities showcase their talents at the Shades of Excellence Arts Festival at the University of Limpopo, highlighting that people with disabilities should have equal opportunities to participate in and contribute to the arts industry.

Music, performance and visual art by artists with disabilities filled the Shades of Excellence Arts Festival, hosted by the University of Limpopo's (UL) Reakgona Disability Centre (RDC) under the theme "Proud, Present and Powerful"

The festival was held with former RDC students who now have careers in the creative industry, showing that UL's support for students with disabilities continues after graduation.

It brought together RDC students, members of the university community, the Kananelo Square Foundation and the wider community.

The initiative was supported by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, the National Arts Council and the Presidential Employment Stimulus, and sought to address barriers that often prevent artists with disabilities from accessing performance opportunities and gaining recognition.



Boitumelo Mainganya, also known as Gaddafi the Poet, a University of Limpopo alumnus and founder of BTM Kreative Holdings.

Boitumelo Mainganya, known as Gaddafi the Poet, is the founder of BTM Kreative Holdings, an event partner, and a UL alumnus. He said artists with disabilities often find it difficult to get opportunities in the creative industry.

He noted that while students could access support through structures such as RDC during their studies, they often faced greater challenges when pursuing opportunities beyond the university.

"The truth is, you can get the comfort you need while you're still at university, and you have the support of RDC. But when you're going out there to face the world, people don't really care whether you're in a wheelchair, blind, living with albinism or not," he said.

Mainganya established Shades of Excellence to give artists with disabilities opportunities to perform, reach wider audiences and demonstrate their abilities. The festival also encourages event organisers and other industry stakeholders to include people with disabilities in their work.

The festival also encourages event organisers and other industry stakeholders to include people with disabilities in their work.

For UL, the initiative reflects the role of RDC in supporting students with disabilities and promoting their participation in university life, while preparing them for life after their studies.

Among the featured artists was Kamogelo Mokoena, who creates art using his mouth, demonstrating how creativity can be expressed in different ways.

Phyllis Mutele, Orientation and Mobility Practitioner at RDC, said the festival provided an important platform for students with disabilities to express themselves and pursue their artistic interests.

"We want them to be seen, heard and given opportunities to pursue their creative ambitions," she said.

The festival also highlighted the need for continued access to exhibitions, performances and other professional opportunities for artists with disabilities.

Food security in focus as UL co-hosts the 63rd AEASA Conference

Professor Jan Hlongwane urges agricultural economists to anticipate crises as UL researchers present studies on consumer trust, maize value chains and food security at the 63rd AEASA Conference

By Johannes Selepe - Mosela.selepe@ul.ac.za



Photos
Frans Nkhapele

Professor Jan Hlongwane, President of the Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa (AEASA) and Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Limpopo.

Agricultural economists must anticipate crises such as climate change, foot-and-mouth disease and market disruptions rather than wait for them, Professor Jan Hlongwane told the 63rd Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa (AEASA) Conference held recently in Mokopane

Prof Hlongwane, AEASA President and Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Limpopo (UL), spoke at a conference co-hosted by UL. At the conference, a UL doctoral student took first place in the poster category, while UL researchers presented work on consumer trust, maize value chains and food security, among other topics.

"We seem to be reactive. We wait for things to happen and react. We need agricultural economists who are going to be proactive," he said.

Prof Hlongwane said AEASA had contributed to community development, land redistribution and climate change initiatives over the years. However, the sector needed to assess the impact of these efforts and identify ways to advance transformation in agriculture.

The conference, co-hosted by UL, the University of Venda and the Limpopo Department of Agriculture, brought together agricultural economists, policymakers and scholars to discuss challenges shaping agriculture and food systems.

Professor Leseilane Mampuru, Acting Executive Dean of UL's Faculty of Science and Agriculture, said the conference was timely, given the economic, environmental, technological and geopolitical pressures facing agriculture.

This year's theme, "Geopolitics in Agriculture: Striking a Balance Between Policy, Markets, Food Security and Shared Prosperity", examined how international trade, changing markets, climate variability, technology and public policy influence food production and distribution.

Prof Mampuru said universities had a responsibility to ensure that their research and teaching benefited society, particularly rural communities and the agricultural sector.

UL researchers contributed to the discussions through studies addressing consumer trust, agricultural markets and transformation, amongst others.

Master's student Valencia Mashegwana presented research on consumer trust in informal food markets among rural households in Makhuduthamaga Local Municipality, focusing on Ga-Mashegwana Village.

Her study, titled "Consumer Trust and Perceptions of Informal Food Markets: Evidence from Rural Households in Makhuduthamaga Local Municipality", examines how product quality, household characteristics, market preferences and consumer experiences influence trust in informal markets.

Mashegwana, who is pursuing a Master of Agricultural Management, was named Overall Best Student in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture and the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences in 2024.

During the conference, UL doctoral student Lerato Malebati secured first place in the poster presentation category for her research on South Africa's maize value chain.

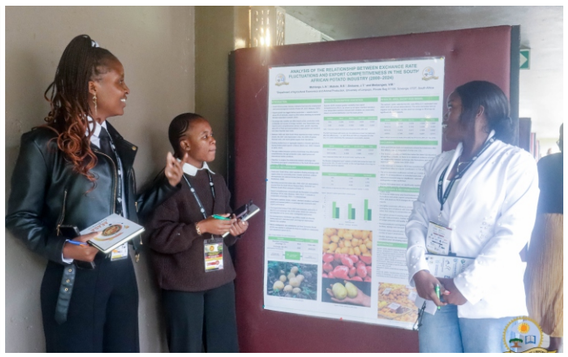
Her paper, titled "A Systematic Review and Structural Design of the Maize Value Chain in South Africa: Market and Transformation Implications", examined how maize moves through markets for human consumption and animal feed.

Using a systematic review guided by PRISMA 2020, the research screened 103 records and analysed 28 eligible studies.

The study developed a model mapping key players, product flows, processing stages and climate-smart practices. It identified nine value-chain pathways and highlighted coordination, market concentration, post-harvest losses and inclusion as areas requiring attention.

"We seem to be reactive. We wait for things to happen and react. We need agricultural economists who are going to be proactive."





Researchers shared insights into challenges facing agriculture at the 63rd AEASA Conference, co-hosted by the University of Limpopo.

Teachers at the heart of inclusive schools, says UL Research Chair

University of Limpopo colloquium calls for schools to move beyond policy commitments and confront the everyday barriers facing learners, with researchers highlighting teacher resilience, resource shortages and the need for meaningful language access for deaf learners

By Nyeleti Nyathi -ulpublications@ul.ac.za



Photos
Frans Nkhapele

Education stakeholders engage in discussions on promoting inclusive education in South African schools.

Teachers are driving inclusive education in South African schools despite scarce resources, and policy must catch up with classroom realities. That was the message from the University of Limpopo's (UL) SARChI Research Chair in Schools as Enabling Environments (SEE) at its second face-to-face colloquium, which brought academics, PhD candidates and educators together to tackle the barriers facing learners, including access to South African Sign Language for deaf learners

It was convened under the theme "Schools as Enabling Environments: Rebuilding Foundations for Equity, Safety and Lifelong Success in South African Education".

Prof Mahlapahlapana Themane, Research Chair for SEE at UL, used his presentation to examine the indispensable role of teachers in advancing inclusive education, coinciding with World Teachers' Day. "Teachers drive inclusive education despite a scarcity of resources," Prof Themane stated.

He emphasised the daily challenges teachers face when supporting learners in schools without adequate classrooms, teaching materials and other essential resources.

While the overarching objective of inclusive education seeks to ensure that every learner can access and benefit from education, Prof Themane noted that severe barriers remain between this ambition and the realities of school life.

Prof Themane also stressed the need to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Professional development and education policies, he argued, must reflect the actual experiences of teachers and learners rather than overlook the conditions in which teaching and learning take place.

The colloquium also turned its attention to deaf education and the integration of South African Sign Language, with delegates highlighting the importance of language access in making education genuinely inclusive.

Addressing the assembly, Khomotso Maluleke, Deputy Principal at Transoranje School for the Deaf in Pretoria, warned that simply being present in a classroom does not guarantee that a learner is included.

"A learner is included only when the pathway from participation to knowledge is genuinely open," Maluleke asserted.



Prof Mahlapahlapana Themane, Research Chair for Schools as Enabling Environments (SEE) at UL, leads research aimed at addressing challenges in schools, including bullying, poor academic performance and drug abuse.

Her contribution highlighted the need to look beyond school enrolment and physical infrastructure to consider whether learners can participate fully, communicate effectively and access knowledge without linguistic barriers. Across the discussions, participants stressed the necessity of connecting research output, policy and classroom practice to build schools that promote equity, safety and lifelong success.

The colloquium offered a crucial platform for education stakeholders to reflect on how empirical research can inform practical responses to the challenges facing South African schools.

While the overarching objective of inclusive education seeks to ensure that every learner can access and benefit from education, severe barriers remain between this ambition and the realities of school life.

World Food Day promotes indigenous foods and healthy eating

Ramakanyane Secondary School learners explore the nutritional benefits of traditional foods and sustainable farming during a World Food Day initiative

By Thabiseng Ngobeni – Thabiseng.ngobeni@ul.ac.za









Photos
Frans Nkhapele

Learners and University of Limpopo staff participate in farming activities during the World Food Day celebration at Ramakanyane Secondary School in Nobody Ga-Mothiba.

Learners at Ramakanyane Secondary School marked World Food Day 2026 by planting indigenous crops and a small orchard alongside soil scientists, dietitians and Green Biotechnologies Research Centre of Excellence researchers from the University of Limpopo (UL), who also showed them the health benefits of indigenous foods and introduced them to careers in agriculture

Organised by UL's Department of Plant Production, Soil Science and Agricultural Engineering, the event was held under the theme "Innovate Today. Nourish Tomorrow".

It brought together university staff, representatives from the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (LDARD), teachers and learners to promote food security, sustainable farming and healthy eating.

Dr Vusi Mbanjwa, a senior lecturer in Soil Science at UL, said the school was selected because of its interest in agriculture.

"We decided to visit Ramakanyane Secondary School because of its passion for agriculture. We are also helping the school establish an orchard and plant indigenous crops. This is part of using science to address the challenges surrounding traditional crops," he said.

The celebration was divided into two sessions, beginning with nutrition and health awareness before moving to practical activities in the school garden.

University dietitian and lecturer in the Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, Neo Malaka, urged learners to include more indigenous foods, fruits and vegetables in their diets.

She also warned learners against eating too much fast food, saying excessive consumption could contribute to obesity and other health problems.

"You should eat more indigenous foods like morogo, sweet potatoes and mopane worms. These foods are natural, healthy and good for the body."

Prof Kgabo Pofu, an academic from UL's Green Biotechnologies Research Centre of Excellence, also highlighted the benefits of healthy eating.

She said nutritious food could help learners stay active, concentrate in class and perform better at school.
Prof Pofu warned that excessive fast-food consumption could contribute to weight gain, tiredness and difficulty concentrating during lessons, as highlighted by Malaka.

The second session took place in the school garden, where learners joined university staff in planting indigenous crops, including morogo and fruit trees to establish a small orchard.

The team explained how growing food at home could help families improve food access and reduce hunger. Learners were also introduced to sustainable agricultural practices, including ways to grow food while protecting the soil.

The university further provided career guidance to learners interested in agriculture, highlighting study opportunities in agricultural sciences and potential careers in the sector.

The principal of Ramakanyane Secondary School thanked UL for bringing the programme to the school, stressing that it will particularly assist learners interested in agriculture as a preferred career path.

Through the World Food Day initiative, the university encouraged learners to take an active role in food production, make healthier food choices and explore agriculture as a way to support their communities.



"You should eat more indigenous foods like morogo, sweet potatoes and mopane worms. These foods are natural, healthy and good for the body."

Limpopo Alumni Chapter AGM sets out plans to support students and preserve Turfloop legacy

The Chapter reports R101,000 in food vouchers for students, academic attire for more than 200 graduates

By Phishego Mohubedu – ulpublications@ul.ac.za



Photos
Dimpho Boshomane

Members of the Limpopo Alumni and Convocation Chapter at their Annual General Meeting, discussing ways to strengthen alumni engagement and support student success.

Food vouchers worth R101,000 for 101 students and graduation gowns for more than 200 graduates through the Borrow-a-Gown initiative topped the achievements reported at the Annual General Meeting of the University of Limpopo (UL) Limpopo Alumni and Convocation Chapter

The Chapter also adopted the Turfloop Legacy Project to preserve the university's history, mentor students and raise funds for UL.

At its Annual General Meeting (AGM), the Chapter reviewed its achievements in the past year and discussed how alumni can contribute to student development, research and graduate support, and the university's growth.



Lekoko Nkadimeng, Chairperson of the UL Limpopo Alumni and Convocation Chapter, presents the Chairperson's Report.

Lekoko Nkadimeng, Chairperson of the UL Limpopo Alumni and Convocation Chapter, announced the adoption of the Turfloop Legacy Project when presenting the Chairperson's Report. The project aims to preserve the university's history, bring alumni together and prepare students for the workplace.

The project has three initiatives: The Legacy 10, the Legacy Gala Dinner, and the Mentorship and Workplace-Readiness Programme.

Nkadimeng also outlined 14 priorities of the Chapter, aimed at consolidating its impact on the lives of students and graduates. These include student support, mentorship, graduate development, alumni engagement, partnerships, research, entrepreneurship, postgraduate development and community engagement.

The Chapter reported that it had distributed R101,000 in food vouchers to 101 students and provided academic attire during graduation ceremonies to more than 200 graduates through the Borrow-a-Gown initiative. It has also established a Suit and Dress Bank to assist future graduates.

Other achievements included supporting the 2026 Alumni Fundraising Tournament, paying tribute to former Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Mahlo Mokgalong, and working to secure partnerships for bursaries and work-integrated learning.

Through the Centre for Future Leaders, the Chapter provided career guidance and university application support at 15 schools.

Puleng Moshoeu, Secretary for Alumni Research, Editorial and Publication, outlined plans for the newly established Alumni Research Committee, which will connect experienced alumni with postgraduate students.

"This is aimed at assisting master's and doctoral candidates with their research," said Moshoeu.

The committee will provide academic writing support, statistical guidance, peer review and mentorship to postgraduate students.

Rabbi Mashabela, Secretary of the Chapter, said alumni had a responsibility to preserve the university's history and contribute to its future.

He added that the Turfloop Legacy Project would honour distinguished alumni, promote mentorship, prepare students for the workplace and raise funds for the university.

"Our history is our foundation, our networks are our strength, and our collective commitment will shape the future of UL," said Mashabela.

He urged alumni to remain active ambassadors of the university and draw inspiration from the legacy of Onkgopotse Tiro.



Alumni and members of the convocation register for the AGM.

Other achievements included supporting the 2026 Alumni Fundraising Tournament, paying tribute to former Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Mahlo Mokgalong, and working to secure partnerships for bursaries and work-integrated learning.

New Appointments

Professor Nnenesi Kgabi is the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Partnerships at the University of Limpopo



Professor Nnenesi Kgabi, Pr.Sci.Nat.: Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Partnerships

Before joining UL on 1 November 2026, she served as Chief Director of the Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate at North-West University, where she was also an Extraordinary Professor in the Unit for Environmental Science and Management and a member of the University Council.

With 26 years of experience in academia, Prof Kgabi has held various academic and leadership positions, including Head of Department, School Director, Associate Dean, Acting Dean and UNESCO Research Chair in Sustainable Water Research for Climate Adaptation in Arid Environments.

She has contributed to research governance and innovation management nationally and regionally, serving as Chairperson of the National Science and Technology Forum and the SADC WaterNet Board, and Vice-President of the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA). She also serves on the Water Research Commission Board, where she chairs the Human Resource Committee.



Kwena Refile Mageza: Director of Legal Services

Kwena Mageza is the newly appointed Director of Legal Services at the University of Limpopo, returning to her alma mater to provide legal advice and support to the University community

An admitted attorney with the right of appearance in the High Court, she holds an LLB from UL and an LLM in Estate Law from the University of Pretoria. She has worked at several law firms as a director and associate and previously served as Senior Director of Legal Services at the Central University of Technology in Bloemfontein. Her experience includes civil, commercial and administrative disputes.

In her new role, Ms Mageza will advise the Registrar and Vice-Chancellor, review contracts, support policy development and promote compliance with the university's governance requirements. She will also represent and protect the university's legal interests in disputes.

"I am here as in-house counsel to address matters and prevent litigation where possible," she said.

Lufuno Tshikhudo was appointed Dean of Students at the University of Limpopo, effective 1 November 2026. He brings more than 25 years of experience in higher education, student affairs, strategic leadership, marketing and institutional management



Lufuno Tshikhudo: Dean of Students

He holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Regenesys Business School, a Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology from the University of Venda, a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing from the University of South Africa (UNISA), and a Project Management Certificate from the University of the Free State. He is currently pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA).

He previously served as Dean of Student Affairs at the University of Fort Hare, Director of Student Affairs at the University of Venda, and Head of Student Governance and Accommodation at the same institution.

He also worked as a manager in Marketing and Student Governance at UNISA, held a position at Tshwane University of Technology, and lectured in Psychology and Lifelong Learning at the University of the Free State.

His experience includes strategic planning, policy development, student governance, crisis management, project management, corporate communications and institutional partnerships. He has led teams, managed operational budgets and introduced programmes aimed at improving student wellbeing, leadership development, academic performance and graduate employability.

He is an advocate of ethical leadership, accountability and good governance. His work includes developing leadership models suited to the African context and encouraging university students and emerging leaders to take on leadership roles that contribute to community development and the continent's future.



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