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Finding solutions for Africa



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UL Athletes Ready to Conquer the 2026 Comrades Marathon

The countdown begins for the 2026 Comrades Marathon, where 16 athletes from the University of Limpopo Athletics Club will compete against some of the best runners in the world. This year's race will take runners from Durban to Pietermaritzburg in the gruelling 89km down run.

Keep an eye on our athletes as they aim to raise the University of Limpopo flag even higher with strong performances in one of the world's greatest ultramarathons.



Finding solutions for Africa

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Africa Day at UL turns spotlight on unity, culture and climate crisis

Discussions on flood disasters, African identity and the continent's future take centre stage as government leaders, academics and students gather at the University of Limpopo

By Rinae Manenzhe – ulpublications@ul.ac.za



Photos
Malatji Monyelegwete

Students, staff members, community members and guests carry flags representing different African countries during the Africa Day celebration at the University of Limpopo, as part of a colourful cultural procession promoting unity, diversity and African identity.

The University of Limpopo (UL) came alive with the sound of drums, traditional songs and celebration as students, government leaders, community members and guests gathered to commemorate Africa Day. Beneath the colourful atmosphere, were important conversations about the future of the continent

“African countries can no longer afford to work in isolation when responding to disasters linked to climate change.”

This year's celebration, held under the theme *“Sport and Culture as Catalysts for Climate Action”*, focused on African unity, cultural identity and the growing impact of climate change on communities across Africa.

Attendees dressed in traditional attire representing different African cultures took part in a carnival procession before visiting exhibition stalls showcasing African cuisine, fashion, crafts and indigenous knowledge. The event served as both a celebration of African pride and a platform for discussions on challenges facing the continent.



Limpopo MEC for Social Development, Hon Florence Radzilani, delivers the keynote address during the Africa Day celebration held at the University of Limpopo.

Delivering the keynote address on behalf of Limpopo Premier Dr Phophi Ramathuba, Limpopo MEC for Social Development Hon Florence Radzilani said Africa Day should not only celebrate the continent's history and heritage, but also encourage Africans to work together in addressing current challenges related to climate change.

Referring to recent floods that affected parts of Limpopo, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, Hon Radzilani said such disasters continue to threaten lives, livelihoods and development across Africa.

“Climate change affects us collectively, and our response as Africans must also be collective, coordinated and urgent,” she said.

She added that “African countries can no longer afford to work in isolation when responding to disasters linked to climate change.”

Hon Radzilani also highlighted the role of sport and culture in bringing communities together and raising awareness about environmental responsibility, particularly among young people.



Victor Kgomoewana, Executive Director for Marketing and Communications at the University of Limpopo.

Victor Kgomoewana, Executive Director for Marketing and Communications at UL, said Africa Day remains an important platform for Africans to reflect on their shared identity and responsibility towards one another. He noted that the university's motto, Finding Solutions for Africa, continues to guide its teaching, research and community engagement.

“Finding solutions for Africa also means understanding who we are as Africans and embracing the responsibility we have towards one another,” said Kgomoewana.

Representing the Polokwane Local Municipality, MMC for Sport, Arts and Culture, Cllr Jerry Mamabolo described Africa Day as a reminder that Africans share a common history and future despite borders and differences.

“Today, beneath the banner of Africa Day, we gather not merely as delegates from different corners of the continent, but as custodians of a shared destiny,” he said.

Mamabolo encouraged young people to use education, culture and leadership to help build stronger and united African communities.



Micas da Cruz Fernando dos Santos from Gaza Province in Mozambique.

The event also featured international perspectives, with Micas da Cruz Fernando dos Santos representing Gaza Province in Mozambique. He stressed the importance of cooperation among African countries in addressing social and economic challenges.

“Our continued progress as a continent depends on unity, cooperation and a shared commitment to building a better future for all Africans,” he said.

Leadership and Sustainability Dialogue questions why Africa still exports wealth and imports solutions

Experts challenges Africa's reliance on foreign systems, warning that the continent's economic future cannot be separated from its culture, knowledge and identity

By Phishego Mohubedu - ulpublications@ul.ac.za

The University of Limpopo's Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership (TGSL) remains on the forefront to create space for conversations about Africa's future, bringing together academics, policymakers and thought leaders to discuss challenges facing the continent and the broader global community

The most recent session, held under the theme "African Cultural Economy and Business Opportunities in the Context of Current Global Conflicts", as part of Africa Month Celebration,

featured a sharp critique of Africa's continued dependence on foreign economic systems, imported knowledge and extractive trade relations.

"We cannot continue solving African problems using borrowed thinking."



Photos
Frans Nkhapele

Advocate Ras Sipho Mantula from the Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs says Africa's future should depend on intellectual independence, local innovation and leadership rooted in African realities.



Advocate Ras Sipho Mantula from the Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs says Africa's future should depend on intellectual independence, local innovation and leadership rooted in African realities.

A central voice in the dialogue was Advocate Ras Sipho Mantula of the Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs, who issued a firm challenge to African universities, governments and business leaders to confront what he described as the continent's systematic intellectual dependence on the West.

Adv Mantula argued that Africa continues to debate its future using frameworks that fail to reflect African realities, histories or social conditions.

"We cannot continue solving African problems using borrowed thinking that does not speak to our history, culture and lived experiences," he said.

His intervention explored the identity, governance, education and the enduring influence of colonial systems in post-apartheid Africa.

According to Adv Mantula, many African countries achieved political liberation but colonial economic structures remain largely intact.

"Political liberation was achieved across the continent, but many colonial economic systems remained intact." He warned that these systems continue to favour a post-colonial elite rather than ordinary Africans.

Adv Mantula emphasised that Africa's future depends on recognising culture not merely as a relic of heritage, but as a robust economic resource linked to knowledge production, agriculture, crafts, language, technology and creative industries.

He further advocated for transformation in higher education. "Universities must stop producing people who memorise systems they do not question," he said.

The discussion expanded as panellists addressed Africa's role as a primary supplier of raw materials to wealthier economies. Dr Tsetselelane Mdhuli, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Cultural and Political Studies at UL, criticised the prevailing model of exporting unprocessed resources while finished products are imported at higher costs.

"Instead of continuing to export raw minerals to Europe or America, Africa should develop the capacity to process them locally," Dr Mdhuli argued.

"Gold should become jewellery, coffee should become packaged products, and minerals should support local manufacturing industries."

Adding a historical dimension, Professor Collins Ngwakwe from TGSL compared Africa's current untapped potential to Europe during the Renaissance period. "Africa has a similar wealth of cultural and intellectual heritage that remains largely untapped," Prof Ngwakwe said.

"Deliberate leadership and institutional support are needed to unlock its potential and reduce reliance on imported knowledge."

Naledi Masango, Lecturer in the Department of Cultural and Political Studies at UL, echoed the sentiments, reflecting on how entrenched colonial economic structures continue to perpetuate inequality and dependence across the continent.

"We need systems that reflect African realities and uplift African people," she said.

Adding his expertise, Prof Omphemetse Sibanda, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Management and Law at UL, emphasised that Africa must cease being a passive observer and begin shaping its own agenda.

"Africa must move from being a passive recipient of global impact to becoming a driver of its own development," said Prof Sibanda.

Seminar encourages men to break the silence

Male staff called upon to confront harmful masculinity, discuss their struggles openly, and champion the prevention of gender-based violence

By Malatji Monyelegwete – malatji.monyelegwete@ul.ac.za



Photos
Forgive Hlungwani



Experienced experts share messages on positive masculinity, mental health, responsible fatherhood and gender-based violence during the University of Limpopo's men's seminar hosted by the Gender Desk Unit.

The Gender Desk Unit at the University of Limpopo (UL) recently hosted a seminar where men were encouraged to openly discuss their struggles, emotions and responsibilities in an effort to create safer spaces for honest conversations among themselves

Held under the theme "Singamadoda: Redefining Positive Masculinity, Becoming Leaders of Change", the seminar brought together academics, community leaders, law enforcement officials and gender activists to reflect on the role men can play in addressing gender-based violence, fatherlessness, substance abuse and emotional well-being.

Discussions recognised men not only as perpetrators of violence, but also as victims, fathers, mentors and individuals silently carrying emotional burdens.

Rev Dr Ngwako Rapakwana, Director of the Gender Desk Unit at UL, emphasised the seminar's goal of creating a platform where men can speak freely, support one another and confront harmful attitudes affecting families and communities.

"We want to build a space where no man suffers in silence, where conversations can lead to healing, accountability and change," she said. Rev Dr Rapakwana said positive masculinity should be rooted in respect, responsibility and equality.

Prof Tholene Sodi, Chair in Mental Health and Society in the Faculty of Humanities at UL, challenged the stigma surrounding men's emotional and mental health. He noted that many men continue to suffer under the misconception that silence equates to strength.

He argued that true masculinity should be measured not by dominance or emotional suppression, but by compassion, integrity and the courage to seek help.

"Seeking support is not weakness; it is strength and self-awareness," he said.

Advocate Mafanywa Mangammbi, Head of Mercantile and Labour Law in the School of Law at UL, called on men to stop undermining one another and instead become supportive allies. He also emphasised the importance of responsible fatherhood and building healthy relationships based on respect and accountability.

Prof Mahlapahlapana Themane, DSI/NRF-UL SARCHI Chair in Schools as Enabling Environments at UL, raised concern about the growing social challenges facing young boys. He warned that exposure to substance abuse, violence and criminal behaviour creates distorted notions of manhood among young people.

"We cannot ignore what young boys encounter daily. Schools, families and communities must work together to guide them," he said.

Dr Thembeka Makamu, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities, urged men to confront their emotional pain and seek support before reaching breaking point. "Do not die alone inside," he cautioned.

Rev Awedzani Nemaikhwe, Chairperson of Civil Society in the Capricorn District, strongly condemned fathers who abandon their children.

"Our biggest sin is abdicating," he said, stressing the importance of men remaining present in their children's lives.

Echoing this call, Christopher Dikgale from the DIMAMO Traditional Leadership Council urged fathers to take a more active role in mentoring boys, teaching them discipline and fostering accountability.

Colonel Mokame from the South African Police Service (SAPS) identified substance abuse as one of the major drivers of violence and crime in communities, calling for a collective response to address the problem.

The seminar was attended by renowned South African actor Septula Sebogodi and featured contributions from the Commission for Gender Equality, the Provincial Men's Sector and the Thuthuzela Care Centre.

"We want to build a space where no man suffers in silence, where conversations can lead to healing, accountability, and change."

UL equips graduates to confront climate crisis

New climate change programme empowers professionals with practical, cross-sectoral skills to strengthen resilience across agriculture, mining, water management and infrastructure development

By Malatji Monyelegwete – malatji.monyelegwete@ul.ac.za

As the accelerating climate crisis increasingly disrupts communities worldwide through rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, catastrophic floods and food insecurity, the demand for actionable and sustainable solutions has never been more urgent



Photos
Mohau Seleka

The 36 graduates of the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme joined Heads of Departments and School Directors to celebrate the successful completion of the programme and reaffirm their commitment to addressing climate change challenges.

In response to these ecological challenges, the University of Limpopo (UL) is advancing climate education through its Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation programme.

Offered by the Faculty of Science and Agriculture through the Schools of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences,

and Physical and Mineral Sciences, this intensive 12-week programme was launched in 2023 and recently celebrated the graduation of 36 participants in its second cohort.

The comprehensive curriculum provides participants with the scientific knowledge and practical skills necessary to mitigate the severe environmental and socio-economic impacts of climate change.

By emphasising resilience, sustainability and innovation, the programme targets some of the most climate-vulnerable sectors, specifically agriculture, mining, water management and infrastructure development



Dr Fred Mphephu, Managing Director of Ogeron, addressed graduates, highlighting the importance of sustainable development, water security and climate resilience in shaping South Africa's future.

During the certification ceremony, Dr Fred Mphephu, Managing Director of Ogeron, underscored the need to integrate earth sciences, climate adaptation and sustainable infrastructure development to secure South Africa's future.

He emphasised that water remains the ultimate catalyst for economic development, particularly within the agricultural sector, where irrigation and livestock production rely on dependable water resources. "Groundwater should be a key part of long-term sustainability planning, not just an emergency reserve," he stated.

Turning his attention to industry, Dr Mphephu noted that while mining is vital to Limpopo's provincial economy, the sector faces increasing climate-related risks. He challenged future mining professionals to intentionally blend technical expertise with environmental responsibility for sustainable industry growth. "Climate adaptation is no longer just an environmental buffer; it is essential for sustainable development and future economic stability," he added.

Addressing agriculture's extreme sensitivity to climate change, Dr Mphephu advocated for immediate climate-smart farming practices, including precision irrigation, drought-resistant crops and rainwater harvesting. He acknowledged the pivotal role of universities and research institutions in promoting climate science and sustainable solutions.

The Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation programme boasts a comprehensive, multidisciplinary curriculum covering critical areas such as El Niño and La Niña patterns, carbon management, smart agriculture, climate law, precision farming, waste management, aquatic ecosystems, energy dynamics and the socio-economic impacts of climate change. Participants learn about climate science, mitigation strategies, adaptation measures and sector-specific vulnerabilities.

To enrol, applicants must hold a four-year degree, Honours degree or Postgraduate Diploma at National Qualifications Framework Level 8 in any discipline. The course is open to qualifying UL staff and students seeking to diversify their skill sets.

Among the graduates was Cathrine Hlongwane, an NRF Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Aquaculture Research Unit, whose research

focuses on periphyton dynamics in aquatic ecosystems. She described the programme as challenging yet rewarding.

"The workload was exceptionally intense for a short course, and I considered stepping away, but I deeply valued the knowledge and was committed to finishing what I started," she said.

Prof Pamela Mamogobo, an Associate Professor in the Department of Nursing Science, highlighted how the programme enhanced her professional and personal growth. "The experience reinforced my commitment to patient-centred care, a philosophy guiding my teaching and clinical practice for over 18 years," she stated.

Abram Mothiba, an Assistant Librarian, noted that the programme significantly broadened his perspective and inspired him to pursue further academic opportunities. Senior Laboratory Technician Dolo Shila also expressed that the course would help her develop an integrated research project and sharpen her focus.

Reahoketswe Mabetwa, a Safety Officer in the mining sector, affirmed that the programme would enhance her career prospects in the industry.

"Climate adaptation is no longer just an environmental buffer; it is essential for sustainable development and future economic stability."



Parliament commends UL for advancing digital skills and innovation

Oversight visit highlights the impact of community-centred digital transformation programmes driven through strategic partnerships with NEMISA, Samsung and government entities

By Malatji Monyelegwete – malatji.monyelegwete@ul.ac.za



Members of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies, led by Chairperson Khusela Lwandlekazi Nobatembu Sangoni, during an oversight visit to the University of Limpopo, where they engaged on matters relating to digital transformation, communications infrastructure and community-based digital skills development initiatives.

During a recent oversight visit, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies commended the University of Limpopo (UL) for its growing contribution to digital inclusion, skills development and innovation aimed at empowering rural communities

The oversight visit included engagements at Radio Turf 103.8FM, the university's STEM Centre and the Limpopo Digital Innovation Lab (LDIL), a facility supported through a strategic partnership with Samsung. The visit focused on assessing the work of the state-funded National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA) and the implementation of its programmes through the Limpopo CoLab hosted at the university.

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies, Khusela Lwandlekazi Nobatembu Sangoni, said the visit formed part of Parliament's constitutional responsibility to monitor state-led programmes. These include the rollout of broadband infrastructure, digital service integration, SA Connect and the Broadcasting Digital Migration Programme.

"The Committee welcomes the collaborative efforts of the University of Limpopo and its partners in expanding access to digital skills and opportunities, particularly in underserved communities," said Sangoni. "We also want to scrutinise the participation of small, medium and micro enterprises in these initiatives, while identifying challenges affecting implementation at provincial and local level."

Dr Jeffery Mabelebele, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UL, emphasised that the institution continues to play a proactive role in advancing digital literacy through its strategic partnership with NEMISA.

"Our responsibility extends beyond teaching, learning and research. Community engagement remains central to the mission of the University," said Dr Mabelebele. "Programmes such as these equip communities with practical digital competencies that improve employability, productivity and access to opportunities within the digital economy."

He further noted that communications and digital technologies have evolved into essential tools for both students and communities, enabling broader participation in modern society and contributing towards solutions to Africa's developmental challenges. Supporting this sentiment, Chief Executive Officer of NEMISA, Trevor Rammitlwa, highlighted the impact of the Limpopo CoLab, describing it as one of the highest-performing digital skills hubs nationwide.

"NEMISA oversees eight CoLabs nationally with a specialised mandate to deliver digital skills programmes to communities, particularly in rural areas," said Rammitlwa. "Computer literacy is no longer optional; it is a fundamental skill that enables people to access opportunities, navigate the digital world and improve their daily lives."

Officially launched on 6 March 2024, the Limpopo Digital Innovation Lab represents a strategic tripartite partnership between UL, Samsung and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition. The initiative facilitates specialised software development training for unemployed youth in Limpopo, helping improve their employment prospects through industry-relevant digital skills training.

The programme's reach has further expanded through the introduction of a second cohort of trainees under the Samsung Equity Equivalent Investment Programme Research and Development Academy in partnership with UL.

The Committee also inspected the University's state-of-the-art STEM Centre, officially launched on 7 December 2024 by Solly Malatsi, Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies. The Centre was developed through partnerships with STEM power and Ripples for Change, facilitated by NEMISA, and is dedicated to advancing science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in surrounding communities.

The facility offers training in drone technology, mobile device repair, and other STEM-related fields. It equips learners, students, and unemployed youth from communities across Limpopo with practical skills and supports business development opportunities.

"The Committee welcomes the collaborative efforts of the University of Limpopo and its partners in expanding access to digital skills and opportunities, particularly in underserved communities."



UL, LDARD support local farmers to protect crops and improve harvests

A plant health campaign in Mankweng connects farmers with agricultural experts to combat pests, diseases and poor soil management

By Rinae Manenzhe – ulpublications@ul.ac.za



Photos
Frans Nkhapele

Aeroponic farming technology demonstrated to farmers during the International Day of Plant Health celebration.

The University of Limpopo (UL) is strengthening its support for local farmers by sharing practical strategies to protect crops, improve soil health and increase agricultural productivity

In collaboration with the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (LDARD), UL recently hosted a community workshop at the Ratanang Farmers' Cooperative in Mankweng to celebrate the International Day of Plant Health.

Held under the theme "Plant Biosecurity for Food Security", the event brought together farmers, academics, agricultural specialists and government officials. The aim was to discuss challenges affecting crop production and food security in local communities.

Ratanang Farmers' Cooperative, known for its active farming operations and variety of crops, provided a practical setting for the engagement, which focused on helping farmers identify plant diseases, manage pests and adopt improved farming methods.

Prof Mapotso Kena, a plant pathologist at UL, said collaboration with farming communities allows the university to align its research with the challenges faced by farmers while sharing scientific knowledge that can improve productivity.

"The rich variety of crops cultivated here gives us a unique living laboratory. It is an opportunity to learn alongside farmers and gain insight into the different plant health issues affecting their yields," said Prof Kena.

Farmers received guidance on common pests and diseases that affect crop yields, including fall armyworm, African bollworm and red spider mites.

Edward Mathebula, a Senior Technician in the Department of Plant Production, Soil Science and Agricultural Engineering at UL, delivered a presentation on nematodes and the damage they cause to plant roots.

To reduce the impact of these pests, he encouraged farmers to avoid planting the same crops in the same area repeatedly and to practise crop rotation to improve soil quality and limit the spread of diseases.

"Do not plant the same crop in the same soil year after year. If you planted potatoes this season, choose a different crop next season," Mathebula advised.

William Mogano, Deputy Director of Capricorn South at LDARD, reminded attendees that healthy crops are essential for food production and sustainable farming.

"Plant health is crucial because healthy plants produce better quality crops and improved harvests," Mogano said.

Mogano further explained that the department continues to support subsistence, smallholder and commercial farmers through the Agricultural Producer Support Policy, which provides fertilisers, irrigation systems, fencing, tunnels, seeds and other agricultural resources.



Edward Mathebula from the University of Limpopo engages farmers on sustainable farming practices and crop protection.

Local farmers welcomed the support and information shared during the event.

Linah Mashangwani, representing the host Ratanang Farmers' Cooperative, said the information would help improve their farming practices and better protect their crops.

"We have gained insights into plant health and learned important farming methods that we were previously unaware of," she said.

Esther Modiba from Hidyahinkwaswo Primary Corporation in Ntsima, near Ga-Dikgale praised the partnership between the university and the department for addressing the challenges faced by farmers in the province.

"This collaboration is providing us with solutions to many of the farming challenges we encounter", said Modiba.



Prof Mapotso Kena, plant pathologist at UL.



William Mogano, Capricorn South Deputy Director from LDARD.

"This collaboration is providing us with solutions to many of the farming challenges we encounter."



UL, Dr Bolavis Foundation reward future medical doctors for academic excellence

The Annual award-giving ceremony celebrates resilience, academic excellence and a decade of training future medical doctors

By Nyeleti Nyathi & David Mmatli – ulpublications@ul.ac.za



Photos
Dimpho Boshomane &
Mohau Seleka

Award recipients display their certificates, trophies and sponsored prizes during the University of Limpopo School of Medicine's "Failing Forward" Awards Ceremony, which recognised outstanding MBChB students across different year levels.

A decade after the University of Limpopo (UL) School of Medicine admitted its first cohort of students in 2016, the school recently celebrated academic excellence and resilience during the second annual medical student awards ceremony

Organised by the Dr Bolavis Foundation, founded by UL graduate Dr Onicca Teffo, the event served three purposes: commemorating the School of Medicine's upcoming 10-year milestone, officially launching the Dr Bolavis Foundation, and recognising outstanding student achievement.

Held under the theme, "Falling Forward", the ceremony celebrated determination, perseverance and growth within the health sciences community. The event also reflected the university's commitment to supporting alumni who continue to give back to their alma mater while recognising the school's expanding role in producing healthcare professionals for South Africa.

As the first medical school established in democratic South Africa after 1994, the UL School of Medicine was created to help address the country's shortage of medical doctors, particularly in rural and historically underserved communities.

Over the years, the school has experienced steady growth, increasing student intake from 60 to 80, enabling more aspiring medical practitioners to access training opportunities. As it approaches its tenth anniversary, the school continues to strengthen its contribution to the country's healthcare system by producing highly skilled medical professionals.

"At the Dr Bolavis Foundation, we believe that every person has potential, and the only way to turn that potential into success is through knowledge, education and a commitment to academic excellence."



Dr Onicca Teffo, founder of the Dr Bolavis Foundation and a 2025 University of Limpopo MBChB graduate, is the driving force behind the UL MBChB Annual Awards, an initiative aimed at recognising academic excellence among medical students.

Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Dr Bolavis Foundation, Dr Teffo, who graduated with an MBChB degree as the top student in the Faculty of Health Sciences in 2025, said the foundation was established to advance education, academic excellence and student development. "At the Dr Bolavis Foundation, we believe that every person has potential, and the only way to turn that potential into success is through knowledge, education and a commitment to academic excellence."

Dr Teffo explained that the foundation was officially registered in July 2025 following the success of the inaugural awards ceremony. The organisation aims to support academic development, research initiatives and student empowerment programmes.

The ceremony also featured a keynote address by Dr Malebo Mabusela, Head of the Department of Paediatrics at UL, who encouraged healthcare professionals to maintain professionalism and uphold the dignity of patients regardless of race, religion, gender or background.

She further cautioned students on the responsible use of social media in healthcare and academic environments.

"As healthcare workers, while using social media, we can enhance education, address critical issues and communicate effectively with colleagues and communities," said Dr Mabusela.

Several award categories formed part of the ceremony, including the Rising Star Award, which recognised students demonstrating exceptional determination and academic promise.

Students from first to fifth year were also recognised through the Top 50 Awards, which celebrated consistent academic performance across various levels of study, with awards ranging from Position 10 to Position 1.

Award recipients received certificates, trophies, cash prizes, vouchers and sponsored gift bags in recognition of their achievements.

The event was supported by sponsors including Toyota Polokwane, JB Financial Solutions and the Treasurer of the UL Alumni and Convocation Limpopo Chapter.

The ceremony concluded with words of encouragement for students to remain committed to academic excellence and continue striving towards becoming dedicated healthcare professionals.

Water and sanitation expert joins LNW Board to help tackle Limpopo water challenges

Appointment of Prof Mabel Mphahlele-Makgwane strengthens efforts to improve water security, infrastructure and research collaboration in Limpopo

By Lesego Maaba – ulpublications@ul.ac.za

In response to persistent water shortages across South Africa, particularly in Limpopo, Lepelle Northern Water (LNW) has appointed a new board of directors that includes Prof Mabel Mphahlele-Makgwane, a distinguished water expert from the University of Limpopo (UL)



Prof Mabel Mphahlele-Makgwane, Head of the Department of Water and Sanitation at the University of Limpopo, has been appointed to the board of Lepelle Northern Water for a four-year term to contribute towards addressing water challenges in Limpopo.

Photos
Frans Nkhapele

Approved by the South African Cabinet in May 2026, the appointment is strategically designed to enhance existing partnership between UL and LNW in addressing the province's complex water supply challenges.

Currently operating under the Department of Water and Sanitation, LNW provides bulk water services across 42% of its designated 80 000 square kilometre service area, which encompasses about 56% of Limpopo.

As the Head of the Department of Water and Sanitation at UL, Prof Mphahlele-Makgwane intends to leverage her dual role to bridge the gap between academic research and public water management. This collaboration comes at a critical time as the province grapples with water shortages and ageing infrastructure. According to Prof Mphahlele-Makgwane, the newly constituted board will prioritise the expansion of regional water infrastructure, improve revenue collection, and integrate Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies into operations.

"The new board will focus primarily on business expansion, which will directly enhance revenue generation. Our goal is to connect more rural communities to the bulk water pipeline network and extend delivery lines to accommodate major industrial and mining sectors in Limpopo," she said.

She emphasised: "No school, clinic, or household in the province should face dry taps or contaminated water systems."

To achieve these goals, she noted that LNW plans to automate its facilities to enhance efficiency and strengthen overall service delivery.

According to Prof Mphahlele-Makgwane, the appointment will contribute to reinforcing the strategic partnership between LNW and UL by aligning academic programmes with real-world industry needs and creating opportunities for students and researchers.

"My appointment establishes a direct link between our academic research and public utility governance. It will provide opportunities for advanced student internships and graduate placement initiatives, allowing students to gain firsthand experience at water and wastewater treatment plants," she said.

The partnership is also expected to accelerate impactful research focused on addressing severe water shortages in Limpopo and across the country.

"Academic research plays a crucial role in tackling water scarcity by developing local infrastructure technologies, introducing digital conservation tools, and providing data to inform public policy," she noted.

She further emphasised the essential role universities play in improving water systems. "Universities contribute through research, policy support and skills development, which collectively help enhance long-term water security," she said.

Reflecting on her appointment to the board, Prof Mphahlele-Makgwane said the opportunity is both an institutional honour and a civic responsibility.

"I was thrilled to receive the news of my appointment, particularly given the competitive nature of the selection process. I am honoured to take on this responsibility and to represent the University of Limpopo at this level," she stated.

"No school, clinic, or household in the province should face dry taps or contaminated water systems."



Prof Mabel Mphahlele-Makgwane, Head of the Department of Water and Sanitation at the University of Limpopo, says her appointment to the Lepelle Northern Water board is expected to contribute towards improving access to clean water in rural communities across Limpopo.

Nurses at the heart of saving lives

University of Limpopo celebrates International Nurses Day highlighting the critical role of nurses in healthcare and nation-building

By Nyeleti Nyathi -ulpublications@ul.ac.za



Photos
Mohau Seleka

Student nurses, healthcare professionals and stakeholders gathered at the University of Limpopo during the International Nurses Day celebration, recognising the vital role nurses play in saving lives, caring for communities and strengthening the healthcare system.

Through its flagship Bachelor of Nursing Science programme, the University of Limpopo (UL) continues to play a vital role in strengthening South Africa's healthcare system

By equipping the next generation of healthcare professionals with the skills and clinical expertise to serve humanity, UL remains committed to enhancing public health.

The nursing profession remains a cornerstone of society, carrying the vital responsibility of caring for

communities, restoring patient dignity and saving lives daily.

In celebration of International Nurses Day, student nurses, experienced healthcare professionals and key stakeholders from various healthcare institutions gathered at UL.

The event served as a platform to honour the significant contributions nurses make within communities and healthcare facilities nationwide.

Under the global theme, "Empowered Nurses Save Lives", the proceedings emphasised the critical need to equip nurses with the

necessary support, education and resources to strengthen healthcare services and patient care.

Representatives from leading healthcare institutions, professional nursing organisations and labour groups used the occasion to recognise nurses for their unwavering dedication, resilience and compassion despite the many systemic challenges facing the healthcare sector.

Speakers highlighted that nurses serve as the primary point of contact for patients and families, making their frontline role essential in promoting healthy communities and accessible healthcare services.



Dr Nare Mochaki from the Provincial Nursing Directorate addresses attendees, highlighting the important role nurses continue to play in bringing hope, healing and quality healthcare to communities.

Dr Nare Mochaki, Principal of the Limpopo College of Nursing and representative of the Provincial Nursing Directorate, stated that the nursing profession carries immense responsibility and remains highly valued in society.

"When communities see a nurse in uniform, they immediately associate it with hope, care, and healing. Nurses save lives daily through their commitment and deep compassion," said Dr Mochaki.



Sponono Mahlatji, Acting Director of the Student Health and Wellness Centre at UL, emphasising the compassion, dedication and commitment required within the nursing profession.

Acting Director of the Student Health and Wellness Centre at UL, Sponono Mahlatji, reflected on the level of dedication required to sustain a career in the nursing profession.

"Many are called to the nursing profession, but only those who are truly dedicated remain to serve humanity with compassion," Mahlatji noted.

The event concluded with a call for continuous professional development, improved working conditions and increased investment in the nursing profession to ensure quality healthcare services for all communities.

"When communities see a nurse in uniform, they immediately associate it with hope, care, and healing. Nurses save lives daily through their commitment and deep compassion."



Jacob Molepo from the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA), calling for greater support and investment in the nursing profession to strengthen healthcare services and communities.

Jacob Molepo, Provincial Secretary of the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA) delivered a keynote address emphasising that supporting the nursing workforce is a direct investment in the future of healthcare in the country.

"Empowered nurses possess the capacity to deliver quality healthcare services and build stronger communities. Supporting nurses means investing sustainably in the future of healthcare," Molepo stated.

Messages of support were also delivered by representatives from hospital representatives, nursing associations, and labour organisations, all of whom encouraged nurses to continue striving for excellence, unity, and quality patient care.

Furthermore, the celebration also recognised the crucial role played by nursing students and educators in shaping the next generation of healthcare professionals who will serve communities with skill, empathy, and professionalism.

Law journal earns DHET accreditation

Formal accreditation strengthens the university's research stature and opens new opportunities for legal scholars and postgraduate researchers

By Rinae Manenzhe – ulpublications@ul.ac.za



The Turf Law Journal (TLJ), a peer-reviewed scholarly publication of the University of Limpopo's School of Law, has officially attained accreditation from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for the 2026/2027 cycle

Editor-in-Chief Prof Hoolo 'Nyane described the accreditation as a major step forward for the School of Law.

"This accreditation is a defining milestone that aligns with our vision to establish the school as a premier centre of legal research," said Prof 'Nyane, who serves as a Professor and Head of the Department of Public and Environmental Law at UL.

"Since its inception in 2021, the journal has experienced consistent growth, attracting submissions from established and emerging scholars both locally and internationally."

Prof 'Nyane further noted that DHET accreditation will create greater opportunities for postgraduate students and early-career researchers.

This is particularly significant as doctoral candidates are increasingly required to publish in accredited journals before graduation.

Lehlogonolo Kgosana, a doctoral candidate in Law at UL, noted that the accreditation strengthens researchers' confidence in the journal.

"The accreditation of TLJ by DHET confirms that the journal meets recognised standards of academic quality and credibility," said Kgosana. "It provides assurance that research published in the journal will be recognised and valued within the academic system. It also motivates young researchers, knowing that their work can reach a wider audience and contribute meaningfully to legal scholarship."

Publishing in accredited journals is regarded as an important measure of academic excellence, enhancing both the visibility of researchers and the institutional standing of universities. The recognition is also expected to significantly strengthen UL's overall research profile.

Despite its current success, the journal faced various challenges during its early years, particularly in attracting a sufficient volume of submissions and securing financial support. Prof 'Nyane noted that many established academics are often hesitant to publish in newly established journals, making support from senior scholars important in building credibility during the journal's formative stages.

Moving forward, the editorial team aims to expand the journal's international indexing footprint, pursue a direct DHET listing and improve its international ranking. Efforts are also underway to strengthen editorial systems, including peer review and copyediting processes, to maintain high academic standards.

"The accreditation of TLJ by DHET confirms that the journal meets recognised standards of academic quality and credibility."



Prof Hoolo 'Nyane, Editor-in-Chief of the Turf Law Journal, also serves as Professor and Head of the Department of Public and Environmental Law at the University of Limpopo.

'Studying Under the Barrel of a Gun' premieres on 12 June to commemorate 40 years since military occupation of Turfloop

The "lions of Turfloop" have officially reclaimed their voice when Jalapeu Films hosted a high-profile trailer reveal at Ster-Kinekor, Mall of Africa recently, for the feature film adaptation of *Studying Under the Barrel of a Gun*

By Moses Moreroa – moses.moreroa@ul.ac.za



Photo
Scene from the film

The trailer for the gripping, action-filled feature film *Studying Under the Barrel of a Gun* was recently unveiled at Ster-Kinekor in Midrand ahead of its 12 June grand premiere at the University of Limpopo (UL), marking 40 years since the 1986 military occupation of Turfloop

The film will premiere at the University while simultaneously screening at Ster-Kinekor cinemas across Limpopo and Gauteng.

Literally *Studying Under the Barrel of a Gun*, a visceral reminder of the era when students were forced to pursue their education under the constant threat of state brutality.

The narrative heartbeat of the film is the seminal memoir by Ernest Khosa, a two-term SRC leader (1988/89 and 1989/90), whose writing captures the unyielding spirit of a generation that refused to be ruled. The film was produced and directed by award-winning Tebogo Malope, who also served as Executive Producer alongside Cornet Thabiso Mamabolo.

In his opening address at the trailer reveal, UL Executive Director of Marketing and Communication, Victor Kgomoewana, framed this artistic effort through the lens of resistance, noting: "If we do not write our own books and shoot our own films, we fall into the trap warned of by Chinua Achebe: 'Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.'"

Kgomoewana said the film aimed to archive an institutional legacy that he believed was nearly lost to time. He underscored that the film was more than mere entertainment. "I stand here tonight not as a victim, but as a custodian of our memory," he declared, grounding the project in a raw personal history. Kgomoewana recounted making a deliberate "painful and necessary" stop at the Mokopane Police Station on his way to the reveal venue to revisit the walls where, in 1989, he was held in solitary confinement. As a young activist serving on the 1988/89 SRC, he was targeted by the apartheid security branch in a failed attempt to turn him into an informer. "They had, sadly, underestimated the steadfast character of this rural boy," he remarked.

Kgomoewana synthesised the story of the University of Limpopo through five transformative epochs, saying the institution began in the 1950s not through government decree, but through "the visionary traditional leaders who gathered under a tree in Mankweng on 11 October 1956". He added that by the 1960s, while the "winds of change" swept across Africa, the apartheid government's attempt to create a segregated "bush college" backfired. "The apartheid planners miscalculated; they built an intellectual greenhouse for revolution," Kgomoewana explained. He said the 1970s ushered in the fire of Black Consciousness, spearheaded by the inaugural conference of Steve Biko's SASO and the iconic 1972 graduation speech by Abraham Onkgopotse Tiro.

The film's title specifically references the 1980s, an era Kgomoewana described as one of "unmitigated turbulence". Following what he termed a chilling and "well-received" response from the Minister of Police to a student warning, the South African Defence Force (SADF) occupied the campus on 12 June 1986. "For three long years, our university was a military barracks," Kgomoewana recalled, adding that "we studied literally under the barrel of a gun". He said the period was defined by the sacrifices of figures such as Peter Mokaba and Josephine Moshobane, noting that, finally, the 1990s marked a transition to triumph, punctuated by Nelson Mandela's decision to serve as the Chancellor of only one university, the University of the North (now the University of Limpopo), symbolising its shift from a "site of war to a citadel of democratic leadership".

Beyond the political struggle, Kgomoewana highlighted UL's status as "an academic phenomenon that defied every systemic odd". He told the audience that the institution pioneered South Africa's first university degree in optometry in 1975 and later became the first historically Black university to introduce the MBChB medical degree in 2016. "Today, with 25,000 active students and high-impact research chairs, the university stands as the economic heartbeat of Mankweng," he added.

Kgomoewana concluded by drawing on the imagery of Maya Angelou to describe the university's journey: "Turfloop sang its revolutionary song even when caged by razor wire of apartheid state brutality. Today, that bird is free, and its song is captured on celluloid."

The trailer reveal was attended by a distinguished assembly of UL alumni, including Rev Dr Frank Chikane, Irvin Phenyane, Judge George Phatudi, former Gauteng Premier David Makhura, and UL Convocation President Donald Selamolela, as well as Deputy Minister of Police Cassel Mathale.

The film, while unearthing raw talent, also stars seasoned actors such as Nthathi Moshesh, Arthur Molepo, Molefi Monaisa, Nathaniel (Nat) Ramabulana, King Monada, Mashabela Galane, and Cornet Mamabolo.

The film will premiere at the University while simultaneously screening at Ster-Kinekor cinemas across Limpopo and Gauteng.



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