



Marketing and Communication
Private Bag x1106, Sovenga 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 2430/2625 | Email: victor.kgomoeswana@ul.ac.za

MEDIA STATEMENT

Wednesday, August 19, 2026

UL Pays Tribute to Former Vice-Chancellor Prof Mahlo Mokgalong

Event: Gratitude Gathering in Honour of Prof Mahlo Mokgalong

Date: Friday, 21 August 2026

Time: 17H30 for 18H00

Venue: Edupark, Polokwane (next to Peter Mokaba Stadium)

Dress: Formal

Members of the media are invited to attend this Gratitude Gathering and are requested to confirm their attendance in writing by 20 August 2026 to mosela.selepe@ul.ac.za.

The University of Limpopo (UL), through its Alumni and Convocation Association, will host a Gratitude Gathering in honour of Professor Mahlo Mokgalong, former Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Limpopo, on Friday, 21 August 2026 at Edupark, Polokwane.

The gathering will celebrate Professor Mokgalong's contribution to the University, higher education and to the communities it serves. His career began as a student at the then University of the North, now known as the University of Limpopo, and saw him rise through the academic and leadership ranks — from Research Assistant and Lecturer to Professor, Deputy Dean, Acting Dean, Executive Dean, Acting and Interim Vice-Chancellor, and ultimately Vice-Chancellor.

Born in May 1953 at Ga-Masemola, Sekhukhune District, Professor Mokgalong was raised in a family that valued education. His father was a school principal, while his mother managed a family shop. His primary education at Schoonoord laid the foundation for a career shaped by scholarship and service.

His journey was also shaped by a lifelong friendship with Professor Malegapuru Makgoba, whom he met early in his schooling. The two later attended Hwiti High School, near the University, where they were exposed to the opportunities offered by higher education.

After matriculating, Professor Mokgalong enrolled at the University, where he obtained a BSc in Biological Sciences, followed by Honours, Master's and PhD qualifications.

In 1977, he joined the University as Research Assistant. He was later appointed a Lecturer while pursuing his Doctoral studies in parasitology. His academic and research work took him to places like Finland and the Commonwealth Institute of Parasitology in St Albans, England.

Following the completion of his Doctoral degree, Professor Mokgalong was appointed Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Sciences. When the then Dean, Professor Mbudzeni Sibara, was seconded to UL's QwaQwa Campus, he took on the role of Acting Dean.

Following academic restructuring, he was appointed Executive Dean of the newly established Faculty of Sciences, Health and Agriculture.

His responsibilities continued to grow, leading to his appointment as Acting Vice-Chancellor during a difficult period for the University. He played a role in guiding the University through significant administrative and institutional challenges. During this period, he was appointed as an Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal from 2003 to 2004.

This period coincided with the merger of the University of the North and the Medical University of Southern Africa (Medunsa), as part of higher education restructuring and transformation announced in 2002 and implemented in 2005.

Professor Mokgalong's journey towards leading the newly established University of Limpopo began in 2005 and culminated in his appointment as substantive Vice-Chancellor in August 2006. At the time, the University had an enrolment of approximately 5,000 students and was facing significant instability and financial challenges. Under his leadership, the University underwent a remarkable transformation. Today, the University of Limpopo has a student population of more than 25,000.

His rise from a university that was once fondly called Turfloop, from student to Vice-Chancellor, reflects decades of academic work, leadership, vision, resilience and service to the University.

Leadership through challenging times

Professor Mokgalong assumed leadership during a period marked by institutional instability, protests, strikes, funding and the challenges associated with the merger.

During this difficult time, he emphasised engagement, resilience, responsibility and teamwork. He also maintained that universities have a responsibility to contribute to the development of society and the communities they serve.

His leadership philosophy was informed by a belief that Africans should take responsibility for addressing the continent's challenges and shaping its future.

Building an African University

As Vice-Chancellor of the newly established University of Limpopo, Professor Mokgalong articulated a vision centred on excellence, global competitiveness, resilience and rural development.

He envisaged UL as a research-intensive university that could use its rural setting to address challenges affecting rural communities.

He also recognised the importance of partnerships, research funding and institutional support in strengthening the University's ability to fulfil its mandate.

For Professor Mokgalong, the University could not operate separately from the communities around it. Its knowledge, research and resources had to contribute to addressing societal needs.

A legacy of scholarship, leadership and service

Professor Mokgalong served as Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Limpopo until December 2025.

The Gratitude Gathering will provide an opportunity for the University community and other stakeholders to reflect on his contribution and celebrate the journey of a scholar, visionary leader, and manager who rose through the ranks of the institution he first entered as a student.

The programme will include tributes and reflections from various speakers who have worked with or know Professor Mokgalong. The speakers will reflect on his contribution to higher education, his leadership journey and his service to the University of Limpopo.

Ends.

Media enquiries:

Johannes Selepe

Tel: +27 15 268 3210 / +27 82 882 5818

Email: mosela.selepe@ul.ac.za

Issued by: Department of Marketing and Communication, University of Limpopo

