THE INAUGURATION OF THE FIRST VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA

On May 30, 2015, the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) welcomed its first Vice-Chancellor, Prof Thoko Mayekiso.

Eminently qualified to be at the helm of a 21st Century University whose leaders need to be visionary, insightful, adept, astute, agile, innovative, creative, resilient and empathetic, Prof Thoko Mayekiso is highly regarded in academic circles.

In her inaugural speech she described the University’s Council, students and staff as a band of pioneers with free hands to start something new and exciting.

Prof Mayekiso has deep insights about the complexities of Higher Education, thus the leadership of the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) could not have been entrusted to a more capable leader.

Those who have charged us with the responsibility to be the pioneering staff at this University have entrusted so much in our hands, and have shown confidence. We are embracing this trust as a privilege bestowed upon us, yet fully mindful of the responsibility it places on all our shoulders.

Our Principals have provided us with resources to establish a new University, build a firm foundation, put systems in place, have guiding policies and procedures, and create a conducive ecology for all of us. This all in order to have an environment where we can be creative, innovative, and responsive to the needs of students and all the stakeholders in our province of the “rising sun” (Mpumalanga) and beyond.
INAUGURAL ADDRESS
BY PROF THOKO MAYEKISO, AT HER INAUGURATION

“PIONEERING: A PROFOUND PRIVILEGE AND A PERPLEXING PARADOX”

May I start by expressing my heartfelt greetings to each one of you present today. “Sanibonani, Molweni, Dumelang. Good afternoon, Goenie middag, Guten Tag, Ndi masiare”.

You all are special guests at this milestone event, in the life of any University. It is a singular privilege to address you on this significant occasion, in my own life, and indeed, that of the University of Mpumalanga.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the outset, it will be important to pay a debt of gratitude to so many who contributed significantly to all my endeavours, resulting in me standing before you at this time.

There are countless people along my journey-who encouraged, motivated, inspired, taught, cajoled, nudged, mentored, and coached me along life’s path.

My late parents, Sitututu and Nozipo laid a firm foundation, and instilled in me the importance of education. My parents played sport, and my father reached the highest levels possible at the time in Cricket and Tennis. They imbued me with the love for reading and piqued my own interest in sport. They encouraged me to focus on tasks at hand and stay disciplined in all that I do. They inculcated in me, values as well as political discretion that turned out to be useful throughout my leadership journey. As they did this, they allowed me space to grow and discover for myself principles and practices germane to growth and development. They modelled for me the importance of supporting people judiciously. This story narrated by Ruth Sanford, a Person-Centred Psychotherapist will illustrate my point.

A passer-by found a young butterfly struggling to get out of the cocoon. A sine qua non for optimal development in the life of a butterfly. He thought he was helping the butterfly, by prising the cocoon open. Unbeknown to him though, was that this struggle to wriggle out of the cocoon, was nature’s way, to strengthen the wings of the butterfly, in order that it can fly.

The butterfly did get out after the intervention of this empathetic passer-by, sadly though, unable to fly-because it was denied the chance to struggle, wiggle and wriggle out.

Let me conclude family acknowledgements, by recognising the contributions and support from my brother, Dr Monde Mayekiso, and my children, Dr Avela Mayekiso, and Siyanda Mayekiso. Let me proceed with my acknowledgements, to other key contributors to own growth and development.

Many illustrious professors, both here in South Africa and Germany deserve my thanks. They shaped my thinking, and nurtured my early endeavours, as a fledgling scholar. Coming to mind here are, Prof Hildebrand Nilshon, my PhD promoter (doktoren vater) at the Free University Berlin, Germany, and Prof Themba Mjoli who guided my earlier efforts as an emerging academic at the University of Transkei. Prof Loyiso Nongxa, who was the Vice-Chancellor at WiTS, Prof Rolf Stumpf, former Vice-Chancellor and Prof Derrick Swartz current Vice-Chancellor at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University created a conducive climate in which to thrive, innovate and be creative.
The Clinical Psychologists who shared their insights, and infused me with curiosity, imbued me with zeal, and made me appreciative of the complexity of human nature.

Roland A Cartstedt (2009) edited a book entitled:

Handbook of Integrative Clinical Psychology, Psychiatry and Behavioural Medicine: Perspectives, Practices and Research.

As I worked through the chapters and noted the inputs of all the contributors, the timeless perennial truths came back to me: We as humans are complex beings. To foster mental health, therefore, requires an all-encompassing multifactorial, and multivariate integrative models. When that is the case, the right pattern of solutions, for the right person at the right time emerges.

The students who brought to the classroom curiosity, vibrancy, enthusiasm and vitality are worthy of note. Many of the students over the years, were first generation students, and truly celebrated the new milieu. They were very talented, obviously a product of natural selection. They were also quick to react though, if they thought the ecologies we were providing militated against their personhood, and violated their essence, and their being.

Colleagues at the various universities at which I served deserve to be acknowledged. They continued to reinforce lessons learned and wisdom earned in earlier years—namely that, none of us is an island. We are part of the greater humanity. We are as strong or as weak, as the teams in which we find ourselves. Vital lessons about teams, are provided in all sporting codes such as the recently completed Cricket World Cup, co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand, and the FIFA Soccer World Cup held in Brazil in 2014.

Planning together; playing for each other; slogging for another; having a game-plan; doing a thorough study of the opposition; doing your homework, watching video after video, and analysing how the opposition plays; getting the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing team.

Having a clear objective, staying hungry, and never allowing success to get to our heads; picking one another up after humiliating defeats, yet celebrating together after resounding victories; motivating the team, and rewarding hard work, managing performance, and holding one another accountable, are key insights we learn from successful teams.

All the foregoing experiences formed, and shaped my understanding of the higher education landscape and my intention is to share these with my team, but also to learn from them. Universities are multi-layered, and require multi-pronged approaches to lead and manage them.

Let me express appreciation to Council, for showing confidence in me, to lead the new university as Vice-Chancellor. I value this confidence shown in me, and I will do my utmost, to reciprocate, by delivering on the mandate given, and exceed expectations.

We are grateful to Prof Andy Mogotlane, the Interim Head of the University and the Interim Council of the University, under the leadership of Dr Madoda Mabunda who contributed to the noble efforts to set up the University of Mpumalanga.

We will be remiss, not to recognize the vision of the Minister of the Department of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, who responded to the clarion call by the provinces of Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape. Heeding the calls, the University of Mpumalanga and Sol Plaatje University were established. These communities and ourselves, have to work together, to ensure that these universities succeed beyond measure.

POSITIONING THE UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA

To members of Council, staff and students of the University of Mpumalanga, we are all like a band of pioneers with free hands to start something new and exciting.

We are at the dawn of something yet to be delivered, against the backdrop of great expectations, and the realities of our time. Those who have charged us with the responsibility to be the pioneering staff at this University, have entrusted so much in our hands, and have shown confidence. We are embracing this trust as a privilege bestowed upon us, yet fully mindful of the responsibility it places on all our shoulders. Our principals have provided us with resources to establish a new University, build a firm foundation, put systems in place, have guiding policies and procedures, and create a conducive ecology for all of us. This all in order to have an environment where we can be creative, innovative, and responsive to the needs of students and all the stakeholders in our province of the “rising sun” (Mpumalanga) and beyond. The rays of the sun are a powerful symbol for the University, representing life, warmth, and energy. They provide light and symbolise growth. Let us always keep this in mind to spur us on.

Concomitant with all the foregoing though, come great expectations. We have to hit the tarmac running, because higher education and training is results oriented, and demands the best from all of us especially because of apartheid related deficits. Whilst there will be patience and understanding in the initial stages from the Department of Higher Education and Training, and the citizenry in general out there, we as staff cannot afford to drink what Dr Martin Luther King called “the tranquilising drug of gradualism”.

There is no room for complacency, or space to drag our feet. Pioneers have to build a firm foundation, mindful that what they are creating should be durable, marketable, sustainable and enduring. Generations yet unborn, must find a thriving University, one they will be proud to join, because we who pioneered it, laid a firm foundation, and got into this immense project with body, mind and soul.
The social cohesion and transformation agenda should be part of what we understand and engage in, for the betterment of our country and the region specifically. As an engaged university, our institution places great value on partnerships / collaboration / linkages and networks and we have identified partnerships as both drivers and enablers in achieving our vision to be “An African University leading in creating opportunities for sustainable development through innovation”. Our vision while unashamedly aspirational is also realistic, capturing our desired identity and ethos as a university. We understand that we are just one of the important stakeholders in the innovation value chain. We seek to establish North-South as well as South-South partnerships, characterized by reciprocity and mutuality.

OUR VALUES

The African life ethos of Ubuntu, referring to our orientation to and expressions of humanity to others, forms the broad and overarching framework for our values.

The values of the University serve as a basis for all our interactions with students, staff and all other stakeholders. As such these values form an abbreviated code of conduct that should shape the behaviour of all the institutional constituents and to which the University subscribes.

Excellence - We commit ourselves to uphold the highest standards of excellence in all our actions, functions and services.

Integrity - At all times and in all situations the actions and interactions of the University will be characterised by undeviating honesty, by utmost fairness, caring for one another as fellow human beings, and treating one another with the utmost respect.

Diversity - Diversity is valued and celebrated in unlocking a range of interactions, and enhancing exposure to a wide variety of diverse cultures, backgrounds, views and opinions.

Collaboration - As an engaged institution the University of Mpumalanga will actively seek out opportunities for collaboration with all its stakeholders in maximising the development of human potential and socio-economic development.

Adaptability - We acknowledge our ever changing knowledge contexts, institutional environments, and social situations and therefore the need to promote and foster adaptability.

Relevance - We endorse the need for its academic programmes, research activities, and engagement projects to respond to its context.

Inspiration - We value inspiration that allows and encourages others to be more and do more than what at first seems possible.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The University of Mpumalanga, as a comprehensive University, understands that its academic project must combine both the creation and transfer of knowledge and skills and the development of students as independent and critical thinkers with a passion for knowledge and its application.

Our teaching will be theoretically informed, pedagogically appropriate, and sensitive to diversity in all its forms in the educational environment. Our teaching will emphasize the interconnectedness of teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and engagement. The development of our qualifications and curricula will be context sensitive.
Our curricula and extra curricula activities will expose students to different ways of knowing and to the value of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Our academic staff will be reflective and reflexive practitioners who use information communication technologies to foster and enhance learning, which will occur in a diverse range of formal and informal settings. Development programmes for academic staff and student support programmes will support a broadening of access, with increased levels of student success.

INTRODUCING THE VICE-CHANCELLOR’S SCHOLAR PROGRAMME

We will introduce from 2016, the Vice-Chancellor’s Scholar Programme which will be a unique three / four-year scholarship and personal development programme designed to identify a limited number of outstanding students in order to foster their intellectual development, refine their leadership skills and enhance their relationship with the University of Mpumalanga and the community. The programme will recognize first year students who have demonstrated excellence and potential in academic achievement, leadership ability and community service.

ENGAGING OUR STUDENTS

In addition to providing full tuition and residence fees, the Vice-Chancellor’s scholars will be engaged in continuous leadership training facilitated by talented academic staff and community leaders and also participate in international leadership seminars and workshops.

We will be engaging our students, especially because they are ambassadors, and co-creators of this new University, so that they can be formidable and committed alumni of the future. We would like our students to embrace diversity and inclusion; be averse to racism and xenophobia; be sensitive and tolerant, ethical in inclination and conscious of their civic responsibility. In addition, all our first year students will enrol for a grounding module on the geological history of the province.

This is done in order for them to appreciate the fact that South Africa has one of the oldest and most complex geological histories on earth. It also has one of the richest mining legacies with a wide range of precious and semi-precious minerals.

Building self-confidence, modelling positive behaviour, providing psychological nurturance, building self-esteem, and encouraging the development of what Angela Duckworth calls "mental toughness" will constitute some of our attempts to provide an optimal enironment for our students to self actualize and become the best they can be.

We want to encourage our students to follow their dreams. Dreams are important because they allow us to embark on a serious journey, in pursuit of those dreams. Without a dream, we may struggle to see potential in ourselves because we don’t look beyond our current circumstances. But with a dream, we begin to see ourselves in a new light, as having greater potential and being capable of stretching and growing to reach it.

ICONIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The envisaged iconic infrastructure will provide a multifaceted environment inspiring both social and intellectual exchange in an atmosphere that is unconventional, original and creative.

We will create social spaces for crucial conversations with both internal and external stakeholders. Thereby create a modern, stimulating and inspiring environment that promotes and rewards academic excellence.

CONCLUSION

The enormity of the task does not escape me and my commitment to the pioneering role is unwavering. The road ahead beckons. New challenges lie ahead as it will inevitably happen, success should bolster our confidence to take on more challenges. Paradoxically, it is the same success which may trap us if we are not careful and visionary. We should, therefore, never lose focus.

We will revisit and revise our initial strategies against the backdrop of the lessons we would learn along the way. We need to remain forever vigilant to ensure that we do not become oblivious to new avenues as they arise. Agility, flexibility, openness to embrace change should be what we always strive for.

For our sake, and for the sake of generations yet unborn, let us join hands, to build a relevant, creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial University, which will serve the needs of this province, those of South Africa, then Africa, and indeed, those of the world generally.

Ndiyabulela, Ke a leboha, Ngiyabonga, Ngiyathokoza, Baie Dankie, Vielen Dank, Ndi a livhauwa, Thank you!

Prof Thoko Mayekiso addressing the audience during her inauguration
Deputy Minister for Higher Education and Training, Hon Mr Mduduzi Manana, MEC for Education, Hon Mrs Reginah Mhaule, Minister: State Security, Hon Mr David Mahlobo, Deputy Chief Whip, Hon Doris Diakude, Traditional Leaders, Executive Mayors, Members of Parliament, Members of Council, Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Mayekiso Family, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Good afternoon, Sanibonani.

We are singularly honoured that you are able to join us this afternoon at this auspicious occasion in the history of our university.

You are all important guests today and are heartily welcome to this celebration on the occasion of the inauguration of the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mpumalanga, Prof Thoko Mayekiso. Indeed many of you who are assembled here today are about to witness the fruits of your own efforts as in this, we are responding to the yearnings of the people of the Province of Mpumalanga. We are bringing the dream that imagined a different future for the people of the province and beyond.

The ceremony marks the formal inauguration of the University’s first leader, who will lead the institution into groundbreaking paths and become a centre of academic excellence.

The University has enrolled 828 students in five programmes in 2015 and there are advanced plans to introduce six new qualifications in 2016. This is indeed a very pleasing development. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, today’s universities face multiple challenges and are under tremendous pressure to transform rapidly in order to adapt to the needs of humanity in the 21st century.

We, therefore present Prof Thoko Mayekiso, as the candidate of our choice, to steer this fledgling university in the desired direction. She is one of three female Vice-Chancellor out of 26 universities in South Africa.

We are pleased to have a scholar who has gone through the ranks of the academy and who also enjoys the respect and confidence of her peers. She brings a wealth of experience that is not only gained from working in this country, but also in institutions abroad. This will enable her to bring a global understanding and context to shape our local experiences. This is very important because the very concept of a university is embedded in the notion of universality. After all we are part of the global village.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY THE MEC FOR EDUCATION, MPUMALANGA, MRS REGINAH MHAULE

Acting Executive Director; Human Resource Mr. Leonard Mavuso, The Registrar; Mr. Sello Legodi, distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen

Sanibonani

I take this opportunity on behalf of the leadership of the province under the capable stewardship of the Premier, Honourable DD Mabuza and the people of the Place of the Rising Sun (Mpumalanga Province) to express our profound gratitude for the opportunity you have granted me to address this august gathering.
To our distinguished guest we request that you should feel at home for you are at the hospitality of a reservoir of energy and the confluence of light.

The East has always been known to be the source of wisdom, where prowess converges as it is stated in the Holy Books that the wise men came from the East (Mpumalanga). This must give you comfort because the Mpumalanga Province is where the umbilical cords of outstanding personalities are harboured.

The first Accounting Officer of this Country, Dr Caiphus Lubisi, the Queen of Gospel Music, Rebecca Malope, Ms World Ms Rolene Strauss, Ray Phiri, Hugh Masekela, Nothembili Mkhwebane, Pretty Mhlongo, Dr Louise Swanepoel from the Hoërskool Nelspruit, the National Coach of Amabhokobhoko Heyneke Meyer the 2015 World Ruby Sevens Player of the Year, Mr Werner Kok, the world acclaimed soloists, Ms Pretty Yende and Given Mabena, the 2015 SAMA Awards Winner KO who won the best Rap Album of the year and the best collaboration, welcome and promise unprecedented cordiality to Professor Thoko Mayekiso and her team.

The only girl from the African Continent, Ms Nompumelelo Shilangu who will be contesting for Miss Fashion TV that is going to be held in Italy on the 14 June 2015 said I should convey her greetings.

The second to none scenic beauty of our panorama precinct, the Shangaan Cultural Village, the Three Rondavels, Mac-Mac falls, the Gods Window, the Pot Holes, Maklonjwa and Lebombo Mountains, the Olifant, Crocodile and Blyde River Canyon, the Kruger National Park which harbours the big five and the Sudwala Caves which are regarded as the oldest known caves in the world, the coves rest in Pre-Cambrian dolomite rocks that are also amongst the second oldest known sedimentary rocks on earth equally salutes you as you land in our area of influence.

The Daisy which is the flower that only grows in Barberton and the Botanical Gardens blossoms today for this occasion, guarantees a brighter tomorrow for the province.

The five million citizens from the 18 local municipalities, three municipal district namely Ehlanzeni, Gert Sibande and Nkangala are hopeful of a total emancipation now that you have graced this land.

The energy and mining institutions around Emalahleni and Steve Tshwete Municipality, SASOL, Eskom, Barberton Mines, the financial sector are with us as we are rolling the red carpet for you.

The plus one million learners from Grade R to 12, the 2014 overall grade 12 best learner Ms Madri Wiid, 32 000 educators, principal of the 2014 overall best school, Hoërskool Nelspruit, Dr Louise Swanepoel from the mainstream schools, 18 special schools which are managed in 68 circuits that are falling under four districts appreciate that the future of this country and province in particular is guaranteed and are thankful that of all the places who could have settled in you chose to share your resourcefulness with Mpumalanga.

The First Black African to summit the highest mountain on earth, Mount Everest Mr Sibusiso Vilane and the CEO of Imbumba Foundation who for the past three years reached the summit of the highest mountain in Africa, the Kilimanjaro mountain in order to raise proceeds to promote his Caring4 Girls programme, Mr Richard Mabaso equally pays homage to you Professor Mayekiso.

All our struggle heroes and heroines who sacrificed their lives who are in the company of the “Lion of the East”, Cde Gert Sibande and the First National President of the Congress of the South African Students (COSAS) Cde Ephraim Mogale are smiling from the grave and its like I hear them saluting you with the “Each One Teach One” slogan.

Imibutho yabantu under the stewardship of their secretaries Cde Lucky Ndinisa, Umbutho wabasebenzi Cde Fidel Mlombo and umbutho wamabovana Cde Fikile Bonakele Majuba, Umbutho Wolusha Lwaka Khongolose, Cde Sasekane Manzini celebrates the landing of our daughter who will spearhead what was espoused by the Freedom Charter 60 years ago that the doors of learning and culture shall be opened to all.

Inkosi Umakhosonke II, Umabhoko, Mnisi, ... basho nangwilinye bathi Bayede Ntokazi yakwethu whose programmes are promoted under the umbrella of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders guided by Inkosi Mokoena equally appreciate your presence in the place of the rising sun.

Tomorrow and tomorrow, the sounds of appreciation will be transmitted in all our media platforms Ikwekwezi, Ligwalagwala, Rise FM of boMadumane, boMbuzane and our Community Radio Stations.

The custodians of the fourth state will be putting pen to paper equally crafting positive messages in the Mpumalanga newspapers, national and international Newspapers including the social media confirming that Umbutho wabantu kept its promise as usual.

Programme Director, the coming to fruition of the University of Mpumalanga confirms our resolve to free this country and our continent from abject poverty, ignorance, backwardness, inequality and joblessness by providing quality education, skilling and training.

It provides practical testimony that there is nothing that cannot be achieved when the people work side by side focusing on a shared vision and a common goal.

It opens a new dawn for Mpumalanga and SADC Countries, Mozambique, Swaziland in particular, an era that is predicted in the Provincial Growth Path.
In his State of the Province Address, the Honourable Premier, Mr DD Mabuza stated that our agenda for radical socio-economic transformation must be anchored on an education system that delivers quality outcomes.

He further said:

“Our future is in the hands of our children and their needs and aspirations are uppermost on our agenda. Our investment in education remains a critical lever for self-empowerment and social progress.”

The University’s comprehensive nature will assist it to diversify in offering qualifications and to ensure that what it offers contributes to the economic growth and development of the province and the country in general.

I visited the University on Monday, 11 May 2015 and I was fascinated by the visionary and exemplary leadership qualities that Professor Mayekiso displayed. She was more than ready to confront challenges head on and to instil a new working culture within the institution.

I saw in her, an African Woman who is highly dedicated, focused and willing to go an extra mile with her team to make this institution, the University of Mpumalanga, work for the people of this country and the African continent.

We are proud to grace the occasion of your inauguration and we wish to make a public pledge that the province will assist in whatever way possible to create an enabling environment for your task to be attained with ease.

Deputy Minister, Honourable Manana please convey our sincere appreciation to the entire staff of the Department of Higher Education and Training under the stewardship of the Minister, Honourable Blade Nzimande for the outstanding work done.

We also thank the President of the Country, His Excellency Mr Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma for the foresight he provided leading to what we are celebrating today.

I wish to conclude by reading the last two stanzas of the African Union Anthem,

Let us all unite and toil together
To give the best we have to Africa
The cradle of mankind and fount of culture
Our pride and hope at break of dawn
O Sons and Daughters of Africa
Flesh of the Sun and Flesh of the Sky
Let us make Africa the Tree of Life

Ngiyabonga.
TEACHING AND LEARNING SEMINARS
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA

The Academic Development Unit is in the process of rolling out a series of seminars on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. These seminars, which are open to all interested members of academic staff, are meant to enhance teaching effectiveness by engaging academics in tailoring pedagogy to make it more responsive to the diverse needs of our student population across our campuses. These seminars form part of our thrust as a Unit towards the improvement of student learning outcomes and experiences as well as the institutional throughput rate.

The first set of seminars on the theme background to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, were planned for 18 and 25 June for the Mbombela Campus and 14 July for the Marapyane Campus. Those seminars rolled out so far have generated a lot of interest amongst participants and were thus rated as highly successful. Future seminars will also be rolled out in the following critical teaching and learning areas:

(a) Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
(b) The development of Teaching Portfolios
(c) Academic Development
(d) Quality Enhancement at Institutional level
(e) Assessing Pedagogical Competence

Work on how to customise and implement some of these practices in our own situation has already begun at UMP through the agency of the Academic Development Unit.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Academic Development Unit has developed a professional development framework that is being distributed to academic staff members during the seminars. This is a document that spells out the nature, rationale, guiding principles, goals and strategy for the implementation of academic staff development initiatives at UMP, our operational blue-print. It is an instrument that helps make academic staff development programmes more systematic and not just sporadic and erratic.

The framework links the Unit’s activities to the achievement of broader institutional goals, vision and strategic thrust of increasing access with success. In this way, the framework acts as a handbook that orientates all academic staff members in terms of the various academic support services that the Academic Development Unit can offer to its constituency.

CHE WORKSHOP ON ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING

From 01 to 05 June 2015 I attended a workshop and symposium on Assessment and Recognition of University Teaching that was held in Protea Hotel, Durban and organised by the Council on Higher Education. This seminar which forms part of the CHE led Quality Enhancement Project was attended by faculty deans, deputy deans, directors of teaching and learning centres and their deputies. It was facilitated by Dr Thomas Olsson from Lund University, Sweden. The workshop and symposium covered a range of pertinent themes that include the following amongst others:

(a) Curriculum Development
(b) Assessment of Students Learning
(c) Portfolio Development

DOCUMENTING TEACHING EVIDENCE THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

We are currently working on a guiding document on the development of a Teaching Portfolio that will be used by academics in compiling their own Professional Portfolios. Teaching Portfolios are useful in documenting one's teaching practices and will be especially handy when academics apply for teaching excellence awards or promotions.

This document, which is set to be completed by end of July 2015, will be made available to all members of academic staff so that interested members can start reflecting and documenting on their current teaching practices. Workshops on the development of teaching portfolios will also be conducted in due course.

Senior Academic Staff Development Professional,
Dr Severino Machingambi
The University of Mpumalanga (UMP) has embarked on a major construction project, with three major developments taking place at the institution. These form part of the comprehensive structural development plan at UMP and includes the construction of: residences which will house more than 100 students, lecture rooms, laboratories as well as the new administrative block (Executive Offices).

This project has created employment opportunities for many locals, thus contributing to local economic development. The current developments are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

The University of Mpumalanga (UMP) hosted a Sports Day at the Mbombela Campus soccer field. The visiting institution at this event was the University of Zululand whose staff members participated in the soccer match on the day between the two institutions.

The purpose of the event was to establish and strengthen relationships with other institutions of higher learning and to promote health and wellness of staff members through the sporting activity. The final score of the match was 2 - 1, with UMP winning the first encounter between the two institutions. UMP looks forward to the next encounter with the University of Zululand.
The University of Mpumalanga (UMP) was part of the three-day provincial career expo which took place at Mbombela Stadium from 24 – 26 June 2015. Approximately 30 000 grade 10, 11 and 12 learners from the local high schools attended the event.

The Expo was an information session that was aimed at assisting the current grade 12 learners with making their career and higher education study choices. Some of the information given at the event also included information on which offices and institutions the learners could approach for financial assistance. The event was also an opportunity for the grade 10 and 11 learners to obtain information about their future career choices and how to gain access to higher education when they reach grade 12.

This year’s Expo was officially opened by Acting Premier, Vusi Shongwe together with MEC Mhaule. Premier Shongwe requested young people seize the opportunities that government is availing to them.

The Expo resonates from the 2014 Youth Summit where the province resolved to put the Youth Empowerment Agenda at the centre of its entire development endeavour. It serves as a platform to showcase opportunities that can be exploited towards the personal advancement of the youth in the province; while hoping that they grab every opportunity with both hands.

“We are a government and most importantly a nation that cares for its youth, and working together we have fought against many battles that previously acted as hurdles that hindered our growth as a people. We therefore cannot let the plight of unemployment, poverty and inequality reign supreme.”

Acting Premier, Mpumalanga Province,
Vusi Shongwe
The University of Mpumalanga (UMP) would like to congratulate one of our senior lecturers, Mr Khwidzhili on his appointment as an executive member of the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SAAE).

A senior lecturer for Research and Communication at UMP, Mr Khwidzhili was elected to serve as a National Board member of the SAAE during its annual national conference which took place from 2-4 June 2015 was hosted by Ingwenyama Lodge in White River.

Two papers on Agriculture were presented at this year’s conference. Dr Aghoror presented a paper on Agricultural Extension and Mr Danny Leroux, presented a paper on Agricultural Irrigation System.

Mr Khwidzhili said that he would like to encourage other UMP academic staff to join their own professional bodies.

“This will enable my colleagues to contribute through research internationally.”

Second year NDip Hospitality Management student, Sibusiso Sibiya, is one of the many University of Mpumalanga (UMP) students currently doing their Experiential Learning. Currently working at Royal Hotel Pilgrims Rest, Sibusiso’s training which was facilitated by the University, would be for a duration of six months.

“I have been given opportunity to work at various department which includes front office management, house keeping, food, beverage and services.”

Sibusiso believes that hospitality management is not only about doing the job, but building relationships with organisations and individuals from various organisations and backgrounds.

“I'm optimistic about starting my own business in Tourism and Hospitality. Through experiential training, I will develop skills and abilities required for one to be an entrepreneur in the Tourism Industry.”

His advice to other students, “keep your self-esteem, never underestimate yourselves and have a positive attitude on your chosen career”. 