

UNIMA Bulletin



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All eyes on HoDs

We welcome you, our readers, to another issue of the *UNIMA Bulletin*, which gives us a chance to reflect on some of the positive developments at our beloved campus. For a long time, we have existed as an unofficial channel for updating UNIMA's stakeholders about some of the achievements of our staff and students, as well as various research projects and construction work happening at the campus.

As we present this issue to you, we would like to reflect that, as of 1st May, 2023, the University of Malawi has made some huge strides in filling vacancies in its management portfolio. We started with populating the topmost offices of Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor. Along the way, we have managed to recruit Executive Deans of Schools, the Director of Student Affairs, and the Director of Finance and Investments. The most recent achievement is the recruitment of Heads of Departments. This is a significant step, given that Schools and Departments have been reconfigured after the delinking process. Therefore, while some Heads of Department find themselves on familiar terrain, perhaps with a slight change in the nomenclature of their section, there are some Heads who are leading what are

altogether new Departments, and therefore have their work cut out for them.

We wish all these new officers the best, but at the same time, we have our eyes on them, keen to see what they will deliver that will be different from the age-old way of doing things at this institution.

Among the developments that have stood out in the past number of months are the partnerships that UNIMA has established with other universities. UNIMA's track record has proven to be attractive to various institutions at the international level, who seek to establish MoUs with us. This is a key part of our internationalization drive, and the institution is already reaping the fruits of some of these agreements, notably through opportunities for our staff to go for further training, and the enrolment of some staff from our partner institutions in our own postgraduate programs.

Meanwhile, we continue to register admirable successes in the various sections at UNIMA. We have had a number of seminars at the university, featuring speakers from within and outside the campus. These fora afford us the opportunity to learn what research is ongoing, and are indeed brain fodder, permitting the engagement in discussions

on various fields of research and their relevance to society. Speaking of which, one of the highlights in terms of showcasing research and learning materials has been the EdTech event. During this function, participants from UNIMA illustrated how the university employs modern technology in the delivery of lessons and engagement in research. The event reminded us of how the University of Malawi does not exist only though the visible infrastructure that has been admired for a long time, but also that a huge section of the institution's activities exists in the online space.

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The Vice Chancellor shakes hands with a distinction degree awardee during the ceremony

UNIMA for increased student enrolment

The city of Zomba always feels the impact when there is a graduation ceremony. On this day, all roads lead to the Great Hall at the university, where there is always a colourful gathering of joyous graduands, as well as proud parents and staff. This is most certainly true of 5th April, 2023, during a graduation ceremony that was hosted by the University of Malawi. Graduates from the University of Malawi as well as its sister universities, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHEs) and Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS), were awarded certificates and degrees of various levels during the ceremony. The event was presided over by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Samson Sajidu. Also in attendance were the Chairman of the University of Malawi Council, Dr. George Partridge, and the Minister of Education, Honourable Madalitso Kambauwa-Wirima, as well as visitors from the United Kingdom's Bath Spa University.

The graduation ceremony was held in two sessions, one in the morning and one in

the afternoon. Over 2400 students from the three institutions – UNIMA, MUBAS and KUHEs – received awards in their various programmes. This led to an upsurge in business within the city, as cameramen, vendors of food, flowers and other items flocked to the UNIMA campus.

During the ceremony, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu, expressed his appreciation to all the parents who were present and congratulated the graduating students. In his remarks, he praised all the graduands for their hard work and dedication that has led to their success. As a means of promoting and offering quality education, the Vice Chancellor also mentioned some of the developments that are planned for the University of Malawi.

“Our vision is to reach 15,000 students by 2026,” he said. The Vice Chancellor continued by explaining that, considering the extended intake of students, UNIMA is planning to build more hostels to accommodate the increasing number of students. The institution has also already

secured funding for construction of classrooms.

The Chairman of the University of Malawi Council, Dr. George Partridge, also acknowledged the success and achievements of the new graduates. He further stated that the Council wishes to introduce online programs and build more infrastructure. As the University that accommodates the highest number of students with special needs, UNIMA plans to establish a special needs resource centre with adequate staff members. Dr. Partridge thanked the government for their relentless financial support to the institution, as well as the support from the Higher Education Students Loans Board, which aids financially disadvantaged students.

Both the Vice Chancellor and Chairman of University of Malawi Council encouraged the new graduates to consider themselves successful and uphold the values of the University of Malawi (UNIMA) wherever they go.



The official signing ceremony

UNIMA signs MoU with MUST

The University of Malawi remains attractive as an institution of higher learning, not only to prospective students in the region, but also to other institutions of higher learning seeking to establish relationships. This is indicated by the avalanche of requests from various regional and international universities seeking partnerships. The latest of these relationships has been established with Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST), a public university in Mbarara City, Uganda.

Established in 1989, MUST is one of the 10 public universities in Uganda, and is well-known for its cutting-edge research and community outreach programmes using various innovations and technologies for the provision of community solutions.

The new relationship between the University of Malawi and Mbarara University of Science and Technology culminated into the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 19th April, 2023, establishing a cooperation which aims to foster advancement in teaching, research and community engagement.

“It is agreed that the UNIMA and MUST will work together to promote the following: Student exchange; Faculty and staff exchanges; Exchange of materials, documents and equipment; Collaborative research in any field of interest common to both universities; Creation and offering

of joint-programs and Collaboration in the organization of conferences,” reads part of the agreement.

The signing ceremony took place at MUST’s newly built campus at Mbarara City. Representing UNIMA was the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu, accompanied by the Executive Dean of the School of Natural and Applied Sciences, Professor Cosmo Ngongondo; the Acting Deputy Registrar, Mr Alfred Iteta Banda; and Mr Lazarous Zaipa from the Finance Section. Upon signing the agreement, UNIMA’s Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sajidu, observed that the MoU augurs well with UNIMA’s strategic direction in which internationalization prominently features as a key deliverable in the university’s 2022-2027 Strategic Plan.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that UNIMA stands to benefit significantly from the partnership particularly through the exchange of expertise in developing technologies and innovations through the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Agro-Food Processing Systems in the School of Natural and Applied Sciences. MUST already developed a similar facility, called the Pharm-Bio Technology and Traditional Medicine Centre.

Said Professor Sajidu: “Although Cyclone Freddy has caused massive devastation in Malawi, the current situation presents

opportunities for research to inform the nature of innovations and solutions that communities need. Therefore, this is an exciting moment of partnership which will see our two universities jointly collaborate in research.”

Taking his turn to speak, the Vice-Chancellor of Mbarara University, Professor Celestino Ubuja, emphasized the need for the two universities to engage in joint research projects.

“We cannot assume that we know everything. Therefore, this partnership underscores our great expectation to jointly apply for grants, among other research opportunities,” he said.



Some of the equipment on display at the MUST lab

UNIMA donates books to schools



Mrs. Naomi Kachoka hands books to some appreciative students

On 30th March, 2023, the University of Malawi made a significant donation to the education sector by distributing books in science subjects to several primary and secondary schools in Zomba. The University Librarian, Mr Brian Sitima-Ndau, and the Assistant Librarian, Mrs Naomi Kachoka, handed over the books.

The donation will benefit a wide range of students, including those attending Matiya Primary School,

Police Primary School, Chirunga Secondary School, Police Secondary School and Mulunguzi Secondary School. In an interview with the Headmaster of Police Secondary School, he expressed his excitement about the donation and observed that the books will greatly assist his students. He thanked the University of Malawi management for the generous gift.

Similarly, the Headmistress of Police Primary School, Mrs. Mlaga, stated that the donation came at the right time. With the donation, students will be able to borrow books from the library and study in their respective homes in case of emergencies like natural disasters which may lead to school closures. She also expressed her appreciation to the University of Malawi management for selecting her school as one of the beneficiaries of the donation.

The headmaster and staff members of Chirunga Secondary School also expressed their joy upon receiving the book donation. "There have been many challenges at this school due to the lack of books," said Mr. Makulu, Headmaster of Chirunga Secondary School. "Our library has not been functional as it does not have enough books in stock. But the donation that the University of Malawi has brought to us will improve our students' performance, as they will have books to study in the library that will enhance their knowledge and contribute to their academic success".

The university donated a total of 30 cartons full of books to the schools. The University Librarian, Mr Sitima-Ndau stated that the University of Malawi management deemed it wise to donate books to primary and secondary schools as a means of assisting students in achieving their academic goals and increasing literacy levels in Malawi.

EGENCO donates laptops to outstanding female science students



EGENCO officials handing over one of the laptops to Professor Ngongondo

The University of Malawi has been privileged to receive donations from different organizations on several occasions. As part of community outreach, UNIMA established a partnership with the Electricity Generation Company (Malawi) Limited (EGENCO) through an MoU to support outstanding female students undertaking engineering-related programmes at UNIMA. To show their commitment to this agreement, on March 10th, 2023, EGENCO donated 5

HP laptops to students from the School of Natural and Applied Sciences. Representing UNIMA was the Executive Dean of the University's School of Natural and Applied Sciences, Dr Cosmo Ngongondo. Also present at the function were the Director of Corporate Services and Company of EGENCO, Mrs Videlia Mluwira, Gender and Social Inclusion Manager at EGENCO, Mrs Doreen Kavala and various female science students from the University of Malawi.

During the Ceremony, Dr Ngongondo expressed his gratitude for the support from EGENCO in donating laptops to students, which will assist them in various aspects of their studies, such as attending online classes. He emphasized that the laptops received by the students will also benefit many of their friends. He encouraged the students who received the donation to continue working hard as a path towards achieving success. The students, who were all filled with joy upon receiving laptops, included Angella Banda, Onnolia Chimteka, Temwa Makwawa, Tadala Kamanula and Miriam Makolo.

In this digital era, owning a laptop is a necessity for university students. These devices assist students to meet assignment deadlines and attend online classes. As such, the donation of laptops will make the beneficiaries' academic lives easier. Onnolia Chimteka, representing her fellow recipients, thanked the EGENCO management for considering them to receive these laptops, as they will help them to excel in their studies.



Attendees at the function

IPOR presents financial support to UNIMA students

The University of Malawi has received support from the Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR), under the Edward Chiwaula Trust, with the aim of aiding financially disadvantaged students. On 11th April 2023, there was a ceremony to mark the handing over of the financial assistance.

The event was led by Dr Jonas Mwatseteza, the Director of Student Affairs, who expressed his gratitude to the staff members of IPOR for their generous support to the students at the University of Malawi. Dr Mwatseteza pointed out that the support received on this occasion is the second highest ever received at the University. In his remarks, he urged the students to maintain good discipline and excellent performance in order to continue receiving the monthly upkeep from IPOR.

The IPOR Director of Strategy and Management, Professor Blessings Chinsinga, explained that the Edward Chiwaula Trust was established in 2016 with the intention of aiding students with limited needs as part of IPOR's corporate responsibility. Currently, it has over 60 beneficiaries studying in different Universities.

"Nowadays, students in universities are struggling financially and this financial burden is also affecting their academic performance," Chinsinga noted. "As such, our Edward Chiwaula Trust aims to overcome this barrier by providing support to needy students through a monthly upkeep of MK60,000 until they complete their education. Furthermore, the Edward Chiwaula Trust will extend internship opportunities to its well-performing beneficiaries after they graduate, to further train them in their respective careers".

Chrissy Ulemu, a representative of the benefiting students, expressed joy as she presented her speech. "On behalf of my fellow students, we are grateful for the support you have rendered to us," she said. "Many of us have been struggling financially in past semesters, which has been affecting our studies. But with the support from Edward Chiwaula Trust, we will now have peace of mind and be able to fully concentrate on our studies. We promise to work hard in class, be well disciplined, and give back to IPOR."

The UNIMA Director of Student Affairs,

as well as IPOR's Director of Strategy and Management acknowledged this initiative as a significant relief to the parents of the students. They both urged the students to spend the money wisely and only purchase necessary items to support their education throughout the entire academic year. So far, at UNIMA alone, 24 students have benefited from the trust.



Dr. Jonas Mwatseteza conveying UNIMA's appreciation for the assistance



UNIMA staff handing over the provisions to the cyclone victims

A friend indeed: UNIMA assists Cyclone Freddy victims

The University of Malawi shares a mutually beneficial relationship with the surrounding Chikanda community, as many residents are employed by the University and students from the institution reside in the neighbourhood. In an effort to support the community during a time of crisis, on 21st April, 2023, the University, through the Confucius Institute (CI), generously donated assorted items worth MK500,000.00 to 20 families who are currently staying at the Likangala Evacuation Center. These families were severely affected by Cyclone Freddy, which struck Malawi's Southern region earlier this year. The donation was led by Mr. Kumvenji Lamba, Assistant Registrar (Students Welfare), who was joined by other staff members.

The team donated essential relief items to the victims. The donation included 20 blankets, 20 trays of eggs, 20 mats, 20 bags of 5kg maize flour, 200 packets of soya pieces, as well as firewood and clothing. During the donation ceremony, Mr. Lamba pointed out that UNIMA regards the Chikanda community as a valued partner. "Likangala is our neighbourhood, and we recognise the importance of supporting our community during times

of need," he said. "We hope that these items will help improve your everyday lives."

During the donation ceremony, Mr Subili Msunthe, the Chief of the Chikanda community, expressed his heartfelt appreciation to the University of Malawi for remembering the residents of the camp during their time of hardship. He emphasized that the camp currently has 68 individuals, including elderly men and pregnant women. As such, the donation of assorted relief items will greatly assist these families in alleviating some of the challenges they have been facing.

The donation ceremony was met with excitement and gratitude from the victims at the camp. One of those affected, Mrs Dorothy Makwinja, expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the University of Malawi Management for remembering them during their time of need. She shared that before the donation, they were living in miserable conditions, having lost everything during the disaster. They had been sleeping without blankets, sometimes with just a piece of cloth for protection against the cold. However, the donation of blankets and mats will help them to sleep peacefully. Mrs Makwinja also mentioned that they had been struggling to get enough

food, with only one meal per day. However, the maize flour and eggs they received will now enable them to have at least two meals a day.

This donation reflects the University of Malawi's ongoing commitment to social responsibility and its desire to make a positive impact within the local community during times of need. The University has previously provided support to Cyclone Freddy victims, including a donation of relief items by the UNIMA Academic Staff Union to victims at Mpsupsyu village, Zomba.



Offloading donated items



A performance in celebration of radio services in Malawi

World Radio Day Celebrations 2023

Every year, 8th February every year is designated as World Radio Day. This day was established in 2012 by UNESCO to reflect on the contribution of radio in various aspects of human life. This year, the day was celebrated under the theme “Radio and Peace”. However, Malawi celebrated the day on Tuesday 28th March 2023.

This year’s World Radio Day celebrations were held in Zomba and were hosted by Yonoco FM, Chanco Community Radio, and Mzati FM. As it is every other year in Malawi, the celebrations were organized by the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) in collaboration with UNESCO. The Guest of Honour at the function was the Minister of Information and Digitalisation, Hon. Moses Kunkuyu.

In addition to highlighting the role of radio in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in line with the theme, the host radio stations also took advantage of the event to showcase some of the areas they have impacted. Chanco Community Radio invited representatives from 3 of its 10 radio listening clubs, women from the Bwalo La Amayi radio listening group, and two musicians who also performed at the function. The radio station also invited Chikho Travelling Theatre, one of the drama groups that contribute to some of its radio plays, who also performed. Also

invited were various stakeholders such as officials from the District Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry offices.

In preparation for the function, Chanco Community Radio procured banners, golf shirts and t-shirts. The banners were displayed during the function while the t-shirts and golf-shirts were distributed among the radio station’s staff and invited stakeholders.

As one of the hosts of this year’s World Radio Day, Chanco Community Radio was part of the organizing committee. The radio station also provided a lorry which was used to ferry tents and chairs to and from the venue. The whole event was

also broadcast live on radio as part of its contribution. Chanco TV was also there, recording the event to be broadcast at a later date.

As part of the celebrations, MACRA pledged to gift each of the three host radio stations with a computer, a printer and a recorder. The Registrar of the University of Malawi, Mr. Martin Matululu, received the computer on behalf of Chanco Community Radio. The printer and recorder will be delivered in due course.

These gifts will help the radio station in the execution of its activities, filling the long-standing gaps that have been there in terms of equipment.



Chanco Community Radio staff



Prof. Happy Kayuni, Executive Dean, receiving the books from Mrs Ida Amani, Director of Moyo Academy

Moyo Academy donates books to Law Library

Many prominent judges and lawyers in Malawi have passed through the corridors of the University of Malawi, which is well-known for the quality education it offers in legal education. Among the resources that these people used is the McKnight Machika Library in the Law Section, which has benefited in the past from donations from various sectors of the country. On April 18th, 2023, the library received 1000 books in the legal discipline from Moyo Academy. The handover ceremony of books was graced by the Executive

Dean of the School of Law, Economics and Government, Professor Happy Kayuni, the Director of Moyo Academy, Mrs Ida Amani and the University of Malawi Librarian, Mr Brian Sitima-Ndau.

During his speech, Professor Kayuni expressed his gratitude towards the Director of Moyo Academy. He thanked the Director for the decision to donate books to the University of Malawi, especially to the Law Section, noting that books are currently expensive due to shortage of foreign currency. He further noted that many law students are bookworms, and as such, the library has been experiencing a shortage of books for all students to use. The donation has therefore come at a good time as it will assist students in completing their assignments. The texts include various titles that feature on various sections of the curriculum such as family law, company law, and criminal law, among others.

“I am pleased with the books we have received today. These are indeed some of the most expensive and fundamental books for the students’ studies. They will assist our students in achieving their goals and excelling in their studies. Moyo Academy has demonstrated its love for our

University through the donation of books today. Instead of selling them and making a lot of money, you had the University of Malawi in mind. For this, we are indeed grateful,” Kayuni said.

During her remarks, the Director of Moyo Academy, Mrs Ida Amani, explained what prompted her to donate the books to the University of Malawi despite spending a lot of money on them. She mentioned that, as the leader of the school, she strives for excellent and high-quality education. Therefore, since the University of Malawi is the best school that offers legal education compared to others, she felt compelled to donate the books to further enhance the quality of education at the institution.

This was a momentous occasion for the School of Law, Economics and Government as they received a generous donation of books from Moyo Academy, a purpose-built secondary school for female students in Malawi. It is located in Nkhotakota. The Executive Dean and University Librarian were both delighted, as this donation will increase the performance of the lawyers in training and assist them in their preparation for moot court competitions among other activities.



Some of the donated books



SULA awardees display their dummy cheques

Artists receive monetary boost from UNIMA

University of Malawi is among the few institutions that promote and provide opportunities for new artists in different fields. The institution has staff members who are qualified in the delivery of training in fine and performing arts. On April 21, 2023, the School of Arts, Communication and Design, in partnership with the Music in Africa Foundation (MIAF) and Goethe-Institute South Africa, awarded seed funding of 1,250,000 Malawi Kwacha each to five participants who successfully completed a one-week Sula Professional Development Training Workshop. These are from the first cohort of trainees. These participants were selected based on careful analysis of their different projects, which were presented as business ideas. These projects were deemed the best out of the 20 candidates who participated in the workshop. The event was graced by Dr Catherine Makhumula, Head of the Theatre and Drama Department. The training was launched last year with the aim of developing skills and techniques to improve the production of high-quality art projects.

In her speech at the opening of the event, Dr Makhumula expressed her excitement by congratulating the first cohort for successfully completing the one-week incubation program, as well as the 5 best candidates of the first cohort of the Sula Incubation Program for artists whose business ideas reached the final stage of receiving the seed funding. She also appreciated everyone who was part of this

workshop, as it was a way of increasing interaction among different artists and staff members. During her remarks, she thanked all the participants for the commitment during the training. Finally, Dr Catherine Makhumula encouraged all those who received the seed funding to spend the money wisely, as their aim is to see artists flourish and take over in art-related businesses.

The event was remarkable, as two ladies, namely Eneles Mpemba (Arts and Crafts), Deborah Khonyongwa (Theatre Production) and three young men, Edward Nyamwera (Stone Sculpture), Isaac Misoya (Film Production) and Mabuchi Chikuse (Audio Production), received the seed funding. Deborah Khonyongwa, one of the awardees who is also the youngest in the

first cohort, expressed her joy by thanking the University of Malawi and its partners for the training that was organised for the artists.

“As artists we have numerous talents that lack exposure due to funding. We are grateful for this funding as it will help us reach out to those who are passionate about acting, train them as actors and actresses and disseminate health and education information,” she said.

Apart from promoting quality education, the University of Malawi is also interested in creating a diverse and vibrant artistic community. The university’s School of Arts, Communication and Design has been promoting the arts through various projects in the past, such as the Brother 2 Brother programme and the SULA project.



A music performance by the Zebras Band during the ceremony



Discussions underway on the improved cotton variety

UNIMA to support development of improved cotton variety

As one of the leading institutions of higher education in Malawi, the University of Malawi is known for outstanding facilities, which include well-equipped science laboratories. Additionally, the institution boasts highly qualified, experienced and innovative staff who are able to manage expansive research projects within the country and beyond. It is in this regard that, on April, 13th, 2023, the University of Malawi's School of Natural and Applied Sciences in collaboration with National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) held a significant meeting to discuss a new project called Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology which will be implemented with the University's assistance. The discussion was led by the Executive Dean of the School of Natural and Applied Sciences, Professor Cosmo Ngongondo. Also present were Dr Dalitso Kafumbata (Senior Lecturer in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology), Dr Catherine Chaweza (Chief Information Officer of NCST), as well as journalists from Zodiak Radio and Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC).

During the meeting, Professor Ngongondo appreciated the NCST for

recognising the University of Malawi as a part of the project. He further stated that the School of Natural and Applied Sciences offers excellent science research skills related to fields including genetics and molecular sciences, chemistry and clinical psychology. The School further possesses unique equipment and laboratories that no any other institution in the country has, making it superior to others.

In the discussion, the Chief Information Officer from NCST, Dr Catherine Chaweza, mentioned that the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology was launched in 2022. "We are raising awareness for Biotechnology by interviewing farmers who have grown cotton, as well as interviewing Bio-scientists to elaborate more on the new variety of cotton and how it can improve the economy and the lives of farmers through increased profits," she said.

Dr Dalitso Kafumbata, a bio-scientist at UNIMA, clarified that the University of Malawi had been working on biotechnology and biodiversity even before the cotton trials began. The School of Natural and Applied Sciences has been providing

diverse training opportunities in science-relation fields.

"Based on the results of the few trials we have conducted so far on the modified cotton, the outcomes have been interesting. The idea behind modified cotton is to enable the plant to defend itself from bollworms. The trials of the modified cotton aim to reduce the need for excessive spraying with pesticides. The trials of the modified cotton variety have shown that the plant is able to defend itself against bollworms by becoming toxic to them when they feed on the cotton, ultimately leading to their death," Dr. Kafumbata said. He added that this will reduce workload for farmers as they will be required to spray fewer times, resulting in lower costs compared to what they used to spend, and they can also expect better cotton harvests.

In the past, UNIMA has participated in various research projects targeting improved yields and disease resistance in different varieties of food and cash crops. These include past projects such as the Cassava: Adding Value for Africa (C:AVA) Project and the Malawi Farmer to Farmer Agroecology Project (MAFFA).



An exhibition of one of the modern technologies available for teaching

EdTech showcases technology for quality education

The University of Malawi is one of the leading academic institutions in Malawi, offering and promoting quality education to students as well as the country at large. The University's School of Education trains education practitioners for the education sector and recognizes the significance of technology in shaping the future of education. On April 22nd, 2023, the School of Education held its first Education Technology (EdTech) event. The event focused on the role of technology and how innovative solutions can transform the way individuals teach, learn and conduct research. The event was attended by various education and information technology experts from the public and private sectors.

During his speech at the event's opening, Dr Peter Naphande, the Executive Dean of the School of Education, highlighted that the digital revolution has brought about diverse opportunities and new ways of learning that can transform our education systems. He further stressed that despite the benefits that digitalization has brought about, institutions are still facing technological challenges that affect academic programs. Therefore, the discussion aimed to address these challenges by exploring best practices and innovative solutions to help the institutions leverage technology to improve the quality

of education offered.

Dr. Chomora Mikeka, the Director of Science, Technology, and Innovation under the Ministry of Education, used the EdTech event to announce the launch of a nationwide broadcasting station aimed at improving education in Malawi. This initiative aims to provide access to education to everyone, even during times of adversity such as the recent Cyclone Freddy. Students in remote areas where face-to-face classes are not possible will be able to attend classes through the broadcasting station. Dr. Mikeka highlighted the importance of education technology in achieving Malawi's 2063 agenda, which aims to expand access to education in universities, secondary and primary schools.

"As the Ministry of Education, we advocate for equality, and promoting inclusive education through technological innovation is one way to achieve this. The technological innovations will enable individuals with disabilities to have access to online libraries and education, regardless of their disabilities," he said.

The Head of the Department of Education Foundations, Dr Symon Winiko, stated that the motivation behind conducting this event was their belief that technology can improve access to quality education. As a

university, the use of technology also makes assessing students easier.

The event was followed by an exhibition where various innovators showcased some of the technological devices they had developed to address challenges encountered in the education sector with the aim of improving the quality of education in Malawi. Some of the innovators were students from UNIMA and Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) as well as officials from HUAWEI company.



Dr. Chomora Mikeka, Director of Science, Technology, and Innovation

Bath Spa University delegation appreciates UNIMA campus

A delegation from Bath Spa University visited the University of Malawi at the beginning of April, 2023. The visit was a reciprocal gesture, following a similar trip undertaken by staff from the University of Malawi early in 2023. This is under the Erasmus-Plus project, which focuses on staff-student mobility.

The delegation of academics included Matt Baker, Senior Lecturer in Human Biology & Nutrition; Matt Dicken, Senior Lecturer in Music; Helen Goodman, Postdoctoral Research Assistant, Research and Enterprise; Judith Holby, Senior Lecturer in Primary and Early Years Mathematics; Jenni Lewis, Senior Lecturer in English Literature; Victoria Opara, Senior Lecturer in Business and Management; and Edward Tristram, Post Production Audio.

While at the UNIMA campus in Zomba, they engaged in a number of functions. Fortunately, the visit coincided with a graduation ceremony at UNIMA on 5th April, 2023. Therefore, as a gesture of cordiality, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi invited some of the members of the delegation to join in the procession during the graduation function, where they witnessed the forms of celebration that animate the Great Hall during the function.



Some members of the Bath Spa delegation touring the McKnight Machika Resource Centre at the Law Section

Their initial meetings were with Deans of Schools and their Heads of Department. Eventually, they had breakaway sessions, organised thematically. According to the Executive Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at UNIMA, Dr. Emmanuel Ngwira, the breakaway sessions were organised so that people working in similar fields could meet and compare notes. "People in Literature from Bath Spa, for example, met their counterparts at UNIMA. Furthermore, people with areas of interest finally got the chance to meet and talk," he said.

The delegation did not only include academics, but also featured people working in the Student Affairs section, who interacted with UNIMA's Director of Student Affairs. Also part of the delegation was the President of the student association at Bath Spa University, who interacted with the executive members of Students Representative Council at UNIMA.

Apart from the campus, the visitors were taken to Kuchawe Inn for dinner, and to Cape Maclear, where they appreciated some of the natural beauties of Malawi.

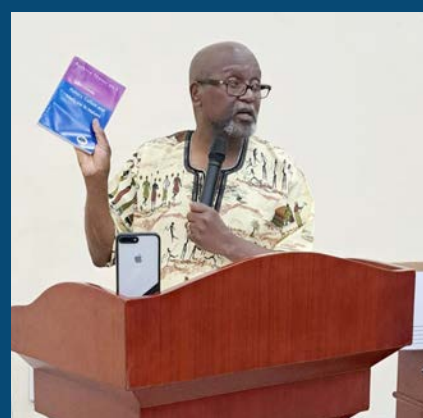
Lwanda delivers talk on Malawi's past

From time to time, different departments at the University of Malawi invite prominent scholars and other people working in the industry to give talks to the academic community. On 29th April, 2023, the Department of History and Archaeological studies hosted Dr John Lwanda at the University of Malawi campus, where he delivered a talk entitled "A Quantity of Life". Dr. John Lwanda is a Malawian scholar based at Glasgow University. He is a retired medical doctor and historian.

In the talk, Lwanda focused on his life, his introduction to and love for Malawian music, and on Kamuzu Banda and his legacy in Malawi. The talk was held at the Wadonda Lecture Theatre, which was packed full of History students, staff and other people who had come to hear him talk.

During the talk, Dr Lwanda reminisced on various issues, such as the political environment in Banda's Malawi, and how it affected the pursuit of education. Lwanda was trained as a medical doctor, but while he was studying abroad, homesickness made him long for Malawi, and his solution of this problem was to send blank audio cassettes back home, where people would record radio programmes and send the tapes back to him. Lwanda noted that, during Dr. Banda's time, musicians often got away with voicing political protest through their songs, while poets did not, and occasionally ended up being detained in prison.

Commenting on Dr. Banda's regime, Lwanda highlighted some positives and negatives. He echoed the popular notion that the first Malawian president was a dictator who infantilised Malawians, but also acknowledged that Banda was a



Dr. John Lwanda

man with a vision for his country, who registered progress against all odds, and tried to unify his people in various ways. He also bemoaned the fact that most of that progress has now turned to ruin. "Banda's legacy of hard work has been abandoned in favour of hard corruption among Malawians," Lwanda argued.

French Embassy officials visit the French Section

The French Section of the Department of Language, Linguistics and Classical Studies was on 7th March, 2023 visited by officials from the Embassy of France in South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi. The team comprised Mr. Ludovic Cocogne, French Embassy Counsellor for Cooperation and Cultural Action and Mr. Luc Deschamps, the French Honorary Consul to Malawi. The two were welcomed by the Acting Section Head Mr. Boniface Dokotala who was in the company of two other members, Mr. Mazunzo Chimasula and Mr. Beaton Galafa.

The Section and the Embassy officials discussed a number of pertinent issues on the future of French teaching both in Malawi and at the university. Mr. Cocogne engaged the staff on the significance of trainings which some members of the Section attended in 2021-2022 at the Centre de linguistique appliquée (CLA) of the Université de Franche-Comté in Besançon, France, funded by the Embassy. The members highlighted the relevance of the training in equipping participants with enhanced teaching skills relevant for the modern French classroom in the country.

Further, Mr. Deschamps acknowledged the important role that UNIMA lecturers in the French language continue to play pertaining to the promotion of the language



Members of staff in the French Section with visitors from the French Embassy

in the country. He particularly cited their participation in French performance activities organized by Jacaranda Cultural Centre across the country, particularly as members of the jury in contests such as *Concours de contes*, *Concours de théâtre*, and *Concours de chansons*.

The members in the meeting also discussed the overall challenges encountered in French teaching in the country as well as at the University of Malawi in particular.

Touching on insufficiency in resource availability, the officials were taken to the French section of the main library to appreciate the existing gap in resources.

The exchange between the officials and the Section led to conversations on the possibility of the Embassy helping out on the resource aspect. Most importantly, the embassy representatives hinted on upcoming trainings for French teachings specifically targeting Malawi.

Deans and HoDs drilled in leadership skills

One of the momentous events that have happened in recent times at the University of Malawi is the recruiting of Heads of Department across the university's five schools. As was the case with the appointment of Executive Deans, the recruitment of Heads of Department has been carried out in a new fashion. The vacancies were internally advertised, and those interested applied and attended interviews. As a result, those who have been appointed are those who performed impressively at the interviews, and bear the requisite qualifications. This is unlike the previous way of doing things, where Deans and Heads were elected through voting at Faculty and Departmental meetings.

The current roster of Heads includes some who have held the positions before, as well as those who are holding positions of leadership for the first time. Additionally, the University of Malawi has reconfigured most of its departments. Some departments have been split, others have been renamed, and some departments are entirely new. There are also some individuals who have been tasked with heading more than one department.

As part of tradition, and also due to these reconfigurations, the UNIMA Management deemed it wise to organise a few days of training for the new leaders. The training was held at Nalipiri Eco Resort, from 25th to 29th April, 2023. This workshop was organised with the intention of imparting leadership skills to them, but also a way of helping them to be familiar

with the Vice Chancellor's vision, which can only be achieved with the assistance of the manpower within the departments headed by these individuals.

During the workshop, the participants were addressed on a number of issues pertaining to their new roles, such as leadership in the academy, resource mobilisation, mental health and awareness. As leaders, they were given a talk on matters of procurement, as well as conflict resolution. Given that UNIMA is constantly updating its lesson delivery methods, the workshop also featured expertise on ICT and e-learning. Another crucial area that was addressed was that of internationalization.

With this robust team of leadership at UNIMA, the institution is bound to rise to even greater heights.



The winners receiving their congratulations

UNIMA Law students triumph over CUNIMA

University of Malawi students have demonstrated their excellence by winning numerous accolades in different fields over the years. Recently, students enrolled in legal studies in the School of Law, Economics and Government emerged victorious in the first-ever DNC Inter-University Moot Competition. As winners, the UNIMA team earned a cash prize of MK500,000. The competition took place on April, 28th, 2023, with the University of Malawi pitted against Catholic University of Malawi (CUNIMA). The finals were attended by honourable judges, lawyers, lecturers and students from both universities.

The DNC Inter-University Moot Competition was launched on April 5, 2023, with the aim of helping law students enhance their skills in searching for contemporary legal problems as well as gaining practical skills in presenting their arguments both orally and in writing. In the competition, the University of Malawi acted as the Applicants, while CUNIMA were the defendants.

DNC is a law practice headed by lawyers Davis Njobvu, Noel Misanjo and Chisomo Nyemba. During his remarks, Davis Njobvu, Senior Partner of DNC Chambers,

expressed his gratitude to all the participants from both universities who took the time to be part of the competition. He congratulated the team that emerged victorious, as well as those who received individual awards for their extensive research efforts. He also emphasized that the competition has also attracted the attention of other lawyers from different law firms who are interested in recruiting some of the participants. Furthermore, he stated that this is just the beginning of the Inter-University moot competitions and that more are yet to come.

During the awarding ceremony, Mr Patrick Debwe, representing the Executive Dean of the School of Law, Economics and Government, expressed gratitude to the Chief Justice and the entire judiciary for allowing law students to practice their researching and oratory skills through moot court competitions, where honourable judges are part of the assessment process. He further thanked DNC Chambers for sponsoring this first ever Inter-University moot competition.

The UNIMA team comprised of Mathews Chawinga and Joel Elifala, both of whom are in their final year of study. They presented their arguments brilliantly with sound logic and substantial evidence.

This accomplishment was a result of the team work, commitment and hard work, values instilled in them by the University of Malawi. Chawinga won the award for the best advocate and has been offered an Internship at DNC Chambers Law firm, along with a cash prize of MK150,000. The best students from both universities who participated in the competition also received various awards.

The University's School of Law, Economics and Government is a vibrant institution that allows legal students to participate in various activities and societies that keep their minds sharp, and to attune their skills to the needs of society.



The winning team poses with their law lecturers



Students engaged in discussions with the EU Ambassador at his residence

PAS Society engages EU Ambassador, NPC

At the University of Malawi, one of the ways in which the student learning experience is enhanced is through educational visits to locations associated with the various disciplines. On 17th April, 2023, students from the PAS Society undertook an educational visit to Lilongwe, where they visited the National Planning Commission premises and the European Union ambassador's residence. The trip was organized by the PAS society and co-funded by the Department of Politics and Governance (formerly PAS Department).

There were 85 students in total on the trip, comprising some studying Public Administration and others studying Political Science. They were accompanied by Ms. Lucy Chihana (PAS Society patron representative).

The first tour was at the National Planning Commission Offices at City Center in Chief M'belwa House. During the tour, different officers oriented the curious students on the functions of the NPC.

The second part of the tour was at the residence of the European Union Ambassador, His Excellency Mr. Rune Skinnebach. At the residence, the students were warmly welcomed by the European Union team, who invited them to a luncheon. The speaker of Malawi Parliament, Right Honorable Catherine Gotani Hara, MP, and the Director General of the National Planning Commission,

Dr. Thomas Munthali, also joined the gathering.

The luncheon was spiced with discussions on topics of public interest such as education, the fight against corruption, trade and investment, and public policy, among others. Later on, the PAS society president, Mr. Chikondi Matiki, gave a vote of thanks to the European Union for inviting the society for lunch. He then asked the EU for official partnership and internship opportunities as well as their presence and sponsorship of the PAS finale symposium scheduled for June, 2023.

Taking her turn to speak, the speaker of parliament thanked the European Union for organizing the lunch and hosting the students. She also told the PAS Society that there are a lot of attachment spaces at Parliament for Political and Administrative Studies students. She asked Ms. Chihana to alert the department that when it is making attachment allocations they should allocate some students to the August house. She also asked the Director General of the National Planning Commission to arrange an education visit of PAS students to Parliament.

Making his closing remarks, the ambassador advised the final year students to develop a concept note for their symposium in case they need EU presence and funding.

Later in the afternoon, the students travelled to Malawi College of Health Sciences for

a conference with NPC officials. At the conference they were hosted by the NPC Head of Research, Mr. Frank Kamanga, NPC Director of Development Planning, Dr. Grace Kumchulesi, and NPC Director of Knowledge and Learning, Dr. Joseph Nagoli.

Mr. Kamanga presented on how NPC is engaging the youth in the implementation and coordination of development plans, especially the newly launched first 10-year Implementation Plan (MIP-1) towards Vision 2063. Dr. Kumchulesi and Dr. Nagoli took questions at the end of the presentation. The students asked a lot of questions and the officials noted that PAS society is the first students' group they ever met that showed a high level of curiosity and rich knowledge of the national plans, especially the vision 2063.

The President of the PAS society, Mr Chikondi Matiki, expressed satisfaction with the visit. "The educational visit was eye opening," he said. "We learnt a lot about what the NPC is actually doing on the ground to ensure Malawi attains a middle-class status. The trip also enabled us to blend the public policy and administrative theories we learn in class with what is real on the ground. The lunch at Skinnebach's residence was amazing. Apart from satiating our hunger and entering Europe in Malawi, we discussed and presented issues of national importance which are also key to our studies as PAS students."

Physics student invents power backup system



Kachokola explains how his invention works

The University of Malawi never runs out of reasons to celebrate its students, due to their high academic excellence, their determination, and their innovations. One of the departments that can always be relied upon to innovate is the Department of Physics. A student in the department, Enoch Kachokola, a 4th Year Bachelor of Science in Electronics student, is one of the recent innovators, having recently invented what he calls a power backup system.

The invention is not part of Kachokola's school work, but has arisen from his realization that he can use knowledge gained at the university to solve some problems in the country. He points out that the invention arose from two specific challenges. The first was the load-shedding programme implemented by ESCOM in Malawi. "I observed the adverse effects that the programme caused, mainly in terms of inconveniences that many people experienced during power outages. I

decided to come up with a power system that can eliminate this problem," he said. Secondly, he points out that he is interested in assisting health centres in rural areas, whose work is usually negatively affected by the absence of power backup systems. He hopes that he can eventually create various machines that may be donated to these health centres.

"It took me 9 months to develop the current machine," Kachokola said. "There are a number of factors that caused this, such as the institution closure, and the fact that I had to source some of the components, such as the battery management system, from China. There is a sponsor who helped me to acquire these parts. The machine has a total of 352 cells. This translates into a capacity of around 200 amp-hours. If we do the mathematics, it comes up to around 3.3 Kilowatts. This power is converted to AC, which can power a load of a maximum of 4 Kilowatts. I have tested this with various items, such as hotplates,

kettles, irons, units and other equipment. With smaller loads such as entertainment units, lights and laptops, it can go for up to 24 hours or more. For this prototype, I managed to secure old laptop batteries that had not completely lost their capacity."

Kachokola insists that his machine is not merely an inverter, but rather a portable backup system complete with an inverter, batteries, overload and overheating protection. The equipment relies on utility power (ESCOM) and takes between 3 to 5 hours to fully charge. He installed a changeover switch that enables the machine to change from utility power to battery power. The battery management system (BMS) ensures that the batteries will not overcharge.

Apart from designing and installing the scientific components, Kachokola also designed its outward appearance using graphic design software.

Zomba City Festival showcases UNIMA students' talents



Members of Dance for Change Club

The 2023 Zomba City Festival, which celebrates cultural heritage and the natural beauty of the old capital took place from 28th April, 2023, to 1st May, 2023. During those days, people enjoyed different forms of entertainment and art appreciation. Different students from the University of Malawi had the chance to showcase their skills during this event. Most notable among these performers were students from the Writers Workshop and the Dance for Change Club.

The Writers Workshop is a student society dedicated to the production, performance and critique of literature and the arts. The Dance for Change Club, on the other hand,

is well recognized for several actions such as rapping, poetry, and dancing which aims at bringing social change through entertainment.

Both of these groups were given slots to perform on 1st May, 2023. The dancers took to the stage at Gymkhana ground, where they engaged in breakdance, *amapiano* challenge and a group dance. The students also performed to local and pop music. One of the group members, Hellen Kasiya, described their participation as a gear towards greatness. "The group felt delightful to be part and parcel of such a big occasion, as this has never happened before in the past years," she said.

Likewise, the Writers Workshop featured nine poets who recited their work in Chichewa and English. The performances were held at the Heritage Centre, where the young students worked magic with their words, keeping the audience yearning for more. The leader of the group, Alfred Kamwendo, promised that the poets would return to the stage next time when the festival is hosted.

This is the first time that the Zomba City Festival has taken place while the UNIMA semester was in session. This gave the chance for university students to participate as performers and merrymakers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Within the two-month period, spanning March and April 2023, we have had a number of activities occurring at the institution. On a positive note, we celebrate the appointment of various individuals who are now manning existing and new Departments at the University of Malawi. We wish them the best.

On a similar note, we congratulate Mr. Alfred Iteta Banda on his appointment as Acting Deputy University Registrar.

Sadly, this period has also been characterised by tragic events. During a mere two months the university has lost a number of students. We mourn Mr.

Vincent Mthobwa, a First Year LLB Hons Student, who passed on in March. During the same period, we lost Mr. Jackson Samilo, a first-year student. Mr. Stanley Mzumala, a second year Bachelor of Education (Chemistry) student, also passed on during this period. The university suffered yet another loss of a student, Mr. Elliam Chimphapa, during this time. We also mourn the loss of a first year Bachelor of Education (Biological Sciences) student, Mr. Peter Devi Chakama. May their souls rest in peace. Their passing is a loss to the institution and the nation.

The university also bid farewell to Mr. Sonpowell Banda of the Finance Section,

who passed on in April this year. May his soul rest in peace.

During this period, some members of staff have also lost loved ones. We offer our condolences to Dr Zuze Dulanya, who lost his wife in March this year. We also offer prayers of comfort to Ms Judith Penyani of the Library, on the loss of her father. Our condolences also go to Mrs. Tilinao Lamba of the Psychology Department, on the passing of her mother. To Mr. Mbisa of ICT, we offer prayers on the passing of his mother. We also pray for the comfort of the Lord to the family of Mrs. Jean Sisy, on the passing of her father.