

UNIMA Bulletin



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Another academic year ends

On the evening of the last day of their end of year exams, which also happened to be the last day of June, 2023, UNIMA students organized an impromptu Mganda performance, which had as its venue the entire breadth of the campus, stretching from Sangala Hostel, through the new Economics Department, all the way to the Malawi Housing Corporation Hostels. Jubilant students drummed, sang and danced along the street, leading some to mistakenly think a violent demonstration was in the offing. However, it was merely the marking of the end of an era, for most of them. For all of them, the main achievement was completion of exams. The continuing students look forward to advancing close to the completion of their programmes. The fourth years among them now rejoice in having joined the 'world'. A good number of the students later packed into buses that ferried them to various districts. The holidays are beginning.

To their lecturers, the reality is different. The teaching may be over, which indeed a relief to many. However, there is now

the painstaking exercise of marking exam scripts to reckon with, more so thanks to the double cohort intake of first years. The campus might seem quiet or empty for the next few weeks, but that should not present the illusion of lack of work. Most lecturers will be at home or in their offices wading through massive piles of exam scripts. During this same period, deferred and referred exams will have to be written and marked. They will require their own marking periods and assessment meetings.

Fortunately, the break from undergraduate teaching is also the time when scholars may find the time to finally pursue the idea of a research paper, or to chase a deadline set by a journal to which they sent an abstract. It is the time when one seeks to strengthen networks, by wooing foreign scholars to co-submit that elusive research grant proposal. This is the time when one tries to make a little bit of progress in the book they have been trying to write since forever.

For some, this is the moment to revisit modules that they will have to teach next

academic year, to see if they can flesh them out, adding new content and removing outdated content. This could also be the moment when a lecturer explores the transformation of their module into the online mode, in line with the progress that is being made in the academic world.

All this goes to show the campus never really sleeps. Even without its thousands of students bustling about on campus, UNIMA continues to be a behemoth of academic excellence, with its gears working in the background, the fruits of which are to be seen every year. At UNIMA, the intellectual activity never stops.

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Parliamentarians appreciate a construction project at UNIMA

Parliamentary Committee Hails UNIMA Infrastructure Development

One of the features that always amaze visitors to the University of Malawi is the infrastructure that the institution currently boasts. As the campus expands, UNIMA has ensured that the buildings currently being developed adhere to the superior standards that were previously established. This is one way of ensuring that UNIMA enhances its learning environment for all who enroll at the institution.

Members of the Parliament of Malawi have, in the past years, shown interest in such infrastructure developments at the university. On June 9th, 2023, the Parliamentary Committee on Transport and Public Infrastructure visited the University of Malawi to appreciate its infrastructure and ongoing construction projects. The event was hosted by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu, accompanied by the University Registrar, Mr. Martin Matululu, as well as Executive Deans of the University. The visiting delegation was led by Honorable Enock Phale, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Transport and Public Infrastructure. He was accompanied by 19 Members of Parliament.

The Vice Chancellor took the opportunity to update the parliamentarians on a number of infrastructure projects. He informed the guests that the new School of Economics is one of the projects funded

by the government. He further apprised them of progress on the administration block currently under construction, which will comprise 98 offices, 6 boardrooms, and will also feature kitchenettes. Additionally, he mentioned that another project is in progress to construct a teaching and learning complex, which will include 30 offices and 16 classrooms with a total capacity of 1,220 students. The University is aware of the increasing student population and, therefore, also has a project in place to build hostels with 800 bed spaces to accommodate its students, prioritizing their living arrangements.

During an interview with Honorable Enock Phale, it was revealed that their visit to the University of Malawi was motivated by the university's ambition to enhance

its infrastructure capacity. Honorable Phale expressed his appreciation for the institution's existing infrastructure and the ongoing projects. He expressed satisfaction in witnessing the tangible outcomes resulting from the allocated resources for building these structures.

"We are impressed with the infrastructure we have seen at the university, and we will ensure that the government reviews the budget to allocate additional funding. This will enable the timely completion of the new administration block that is currently under construction," he said.

The committee also toured other sections of the campus, including the ICT department and the Mwambo and Chikowi lecture theatres.



Construction of the new administration block underway



Students pay attention as Dr Daniel Allen creates art pieces

UNIMA strengthens partnership with Bath Spa University

Early this year, a delegation from the University of Malawi visited Bath Spa University in the United Kingdom, as a way of developing the partnership that exists between the two institutions. Since then, there have been reciprocal visits, which involved faculty members identifying areas of possible collaboration and exchange. Recently, on June 12th, 2023, UNIMA's School of Arts, Communication, and Design welcomed another delegation from Bath Spa University for a 4-day workshop, during which they interacted with students from various departments.

During the workshop, presentations were made by lecturers from both UNIMA and Bath Spa University. Dr. Suman Ghosh, a lecturer in Film and Television Practice at Bath Spa University, elaborated on some of the programs they offer. He emphasized the essential skills that film and drama students must possess in order to make a difference in the film industry. Furthermore, he explained some of the tactics he employs when producing videos.

In an interview with Dr. Ghosh, he praised UNIMA's School of Arts, Communication and Design for the programs they are offering, as they are crucial in boosting the television and film industry in Malawi.

He also mentioned that their visit to the University of Malawi will create an opportunity for both UNIMA and Bath Spa students to engage in exchange visits.

Fine art students received a lecture from Dr. Daniel Allen, a scholar from Bath Spa University. During the session, students were taught how to interpret various artworks and create amusing art pieces using the right materials.

Drama and music students also demonstrated their skills through theatre and song performances, respectively. In addition, the workshop featured a screening of *The Road to Sunrise*, a film by Shemu Joyah, a University of Malawi alumnus. The visitors from Bath Spa, UNIMA lecturers and the attending students highly appreciated the showcased skills and artistry in the film.

The Executive Dean of the School of Arts, Communication and Design, Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi, expressed his appreciation to the guests from Bath Spa University for the visit. He pointed out that students from UNIMA have acquired valuable skills from the presentations, providing them with opportunities for further international interactions. He

concluded by mentioning that they are planning to have students from the School of Arts, Communication, and Design visit Bath Spa University to gain further learning and hands-on experience.

The workshop concluded on a high note as the visitors toured the campus, and later visited MACOHA Clothes Design Factory and Mibawa Television Studios in Blantyre. Their visit to the University of Malawi concluded with dinner at Sunbird Ku Chawe.



Dr Ghosh, from Bath Spa University making his presentation

CHESSAM donates Chess Sets to UNIMA



Chess players receiving the donation from CHESSAM

On June 22, 2023, the University of Malawi was among the five education institutions that received chess sets in Zomba. The chess sets were donated by a charity organization called Gifts of Chess from the United States of America. A total of 1,000 sets were delivered to Malawi and distributed to education institutions, prisons, and other reformation institutions through the Chess Association of Malawi (CHESSAM).

Professor Cosmo Ngongondo, the Deputy Chair of the Southern Region Chess Association and also the Patron for UNIMA Chess Club, handed over the five chess sets to UNIMA. Also present were Dr. Jonas Mwatseteza, the Director of Student Affairs, Mr. Kumvenji Lamba, Assistant Registrar (Students and Sports), Mayamiko Sailesi, the SRC Director of Sports, and other chess players.

In his speech, Professor Ngongondo expressed his excitement as he handed over the chess sets. Being a chess player himself, he voiced his awareness of the importance of the game for students. He emphasized that chess teaches patience, discipline, analysis, and strategic thinking. Therefore, it will help students develop these values, which in turn will assist them in accomplishing their academic goals.

Dr. Mwatseteza extended his gratitude to Professor Ngongondo for including the University of Malawi as one of the beneficiaries of the gifts. He stated that the UNIMA chess team had been facing a shortage of chess sets, and this generous donation has effectively resolved the problem.

“Now that the university has five additional professional chess sets, we firmly believe that our students will have the opportunity to train during their free time. This will undoubtedly open doors for them to participate in international chess competitions,” he said.

The students who were present were filled with excitement upon receiving the professional chess sets. The ceremony concluded with a captivating game of chess between Mayamiko Sailesi and Golden Ngongondo.

Librarians host workshop on records management



Participants at the records management workshop

From 27th to 29th June, 2023, the University of Malawi, through the university's library management, held a three-day records management workshop for 52 participants from various public and private institutions. The workshop, whose theme was “Ethics and Professionalism in Records Management in the Public and Private Sectors”, was hosted at the New Economics section of the campus.

The workshop aimed to equip participants from various institutions with skills in records management and

guide them on protecting the reputation of their institutions. Participants were offered talks and training on various matters pertaining to records management, such as ethics, legal and regulatory frameworks, and record management software. The workshop also emphasized the importance of knowing what documents to carry home from the office and raised awareness about issues of transparency, accountability and confidentiality in their respective working institutions.

In his remarks during the function, UNIMA Vice Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu,

congratulated all the participants who attended the workshop, commending their successful completion of the course. Prof Sajidu highlighted that the course was designed as an attempt to provide solutions to the challenges encountered in records management in Malawi.

He praised the participants as agents of change in records management and urged them to exercise professionalism at the workplace, focusing on expression rather than impression. He encouraged them to strive not to be noticed for their presence but to work competently, leaving a lasting impact even in their absence.

The university librarian, Mr. Brian Sitima Ndau, expressed his gratitude to the Vice Chancellor for the continuous financial support provided to them since the commencement of the workshop. He also thanked the participants for their commitment throughout the three days of training. Furthermore, he urged the participants to apply the knowledge they gained during the workshop in their respective organizations.



Laptop recipients pose for a picture

Bridging the Digital Divide: 40 Laptops Empower UNIMA Students

On June 2nd, 2023, an important event took place as Computers for Enhanced Education (CEE), in collaboration with Turing Trust and Active Youth Initiative for Social Enhancement (AYISE), distributed 40 laptops to underprivileged students at the University of Malawi (UNIMA). This impactful partnership is focused on empowering students in their educational journey by equipping them with the necessary tools to access essential learning resources.

Many students at UNIMA face significant challenges in accessing computers for academic purposes. This hinders their ability to complete assignments, access learning materials, browse the internet, and even participate in online meetings. Recognizing the urgent need to address this disparity, AYISE joined forces with CEE and Turing Trust to bridge the digital divide.

As a crucial aspect of this initiative, the laptop recipients will actively participate in the program by making a nominal financial contribution. The fee ranges from K16,500 to K29,500 per year for a period of four years, based on the laptop generation. This problem structure not only fosters a sense of commitment among the students but also plays a vital role in sustaining the program's operations. Furthermore,

to extend ongoing support, CEE has graciously assumed responsibility for any required repairs throughout the program's duration, ensuring uninterrupted access to education for the students.

Maxwell Chisi, CEO of AYISE, emphasized that the initiative aims to support needy students who are eligible for assistance from the loans board but cannot afford the necessary resources. This collaboration between CEE and AYISE will provide crucial support to these students and enable them to thrive academically.

Dr. Jonas Mwatseteza, the Director of Students Affairs at UNIMA, expressed his gratitude for the partnership between CEE and AYISE. He acknowledged that a significant number of students at the university lack access to computers, making this collaboration invaluable in reducing the challenges faced by these students.

Savita Mpinga, a Bachelor of Education (Chemistry) student and one of the beneficiaries, expressed her excitement and appreciation for the initiative. She stated that the laptop would greatly assist her in her studies and conveyed her heartfelt gratitude to CEE and AYISE for their support.

The distribution of these laptops marks

a significant step towards providing equal opportunities for education and empowering underprivileged students at UNIMA. Through the collaboration between CEE, Turing Trust, and AYISE, students will be equipped with the necessary tools to excel academically, bridging the digital divide and paving the way for a brighter future.



Savita Mpinga, a Bachelor of Education student, receiving her laptop



Smiling faces: The tablet presentation ceremony at Njamba Secondary School

UNIMA in tablet donation drive

The University of Malawi is one of the universities that offer quality education, in part due to the institution's adoption of modern teaching technologies. As one way of improving the quality and access to education in Malawi, the University of Malawi secured 100 tablets, worth MK30,000,000, with the assistance of the Astria Online Learning University, to boost the education sector in Malawi. Out of this number, on May 8th, 2023, UNIMA donated 40 tablets to four secondary schools in the Southern Region of Malawi. The schools include Providence Girls Secondary School, Chikwawa Secondary School, Njamba Secondary School and Malindi Secondary School. The UNIMA delegation was led by Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi, Executive Dean of the School of Arts, Communication and Design. He was accompanied by Mrs Towera Mwachunga, Assistant Registrar (Academic) and other staff members.

During the handover ceremonies at all secondary schools, Dr. Magalasi highlighted the point that the University of Malawi management is interested in improving the quality of education for its students as well as secondary school students in the country. However, they thought it wise to prioritize secondary schools that were affected by Cyclone Freddy, which hit several districts in the

southern region of Malawi. In addition to this, the University management selected secondary schools that offer Computer Studies, in order to motivate students to further advance their computer literacy at the tertiary level after they have finished their secondary education.

Each of the selected schools received 10 of the AstriaTab gadgets. Each of the tablets is ideal for the level of work required by secondary school students, being equipped with 1GB RAM and 16GB storage capacity. The tablets have long battery life, are lightweight and have pre-installed educational applications that students can use. The faces of the students and their headmasters were beaming with excitement upon receiving these tablets, as it was their first time ever receiving such a prestigious donation from a University.

Headmasters from all the secondary schools expressed their gratitude to the University of Malawi for choosing their schools, out of many in the Southern Region, to be among the beneficiaries. In their remarks, they explained that the donation of tablets will assist their students in having easy access to computer studies as one way of equipping them with the computer skills required at the University for every student.

The University of Malawi is aware of global technological advancements and

their benefits to the education sector. As such, in an effort to improve access to quality education, it will continue to assist in ensuring that UNIMA and secondary school students have access to technological gadgets. The university thus also plans to provide tablets to financially disadvantaged UNIMA students.

Recently, the University of Malawi's School of Education held an Education Technology event that emphasized the benefits of technology in the education sector and how useful it is during times of adversity in the country.



Students from Providence Girls Secondary School excited to receive the donation

Communication HoD visits Dakar for PASR Workshop

Dr. Anthony Gunde, Head of the Department of Media, Communication and Cultural Studies recently attended the Programme for African Social Research (PASR), organised by the Marxe School of Public and International Affairs, City University of New York. It is an annual event held in different countries. This year's theme was "Religion and Politics in Africa", and was held at the West African Research Centre in Dakar, from 27th June to 28th June 2023. It attracted participants from various African countries, including Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ethiopia, Cameroun, Uganda, Nigeria and Somalia.

The workshop featured presentations on various topics related to religion and politics in Africa. Dr Gunde presented a paper titled "Religiosity, Emotional Rhetoric and the Legitimation of Gendered Political Power Relations in Malawi". In his presentation, he examined the ways in which religiosity can be used to reinforce gender stereotypes by promoting patriarchal religious rhetoric, and considers the implications of this for women's empowerment in political



Dr Gunde (far right) poses with fellow participants at the workshop

leadership roles in developing democracies. He examined how, in deeply entrenched religious societies, such as Malawi, male politicians may use emotional rhetoric and manipulate religious texts as symbols of violence to promote gender disparities while still embracing the principles of democracy, good governance and human rights.

The paper presentations are intended for inclusion in an edited publication, *African Social Research*.

Following the academic exercise, participants visited Goree Island, off the coast of Dakar. The island is known for its role in the 15th- to 19th-century Atlantic slave trade. It includes colonial buildings, including the House of Slaves, among others.

Historians in archival records recollection project



David Bone (R) presents papers he recently brought to the department

The Department of History, Archaeology, and Heritage Studies is currently engaged in an oral history and archival records collection project. The project involves recovering papers that selected individuals who once worked in Malawi, either as missionaries or state officials, produced. These are documents that, for one reason or another, were not released to Malawi.

Although it was conceptualized in 2022, the project has begun this year, and will run until 2025. The documents

that are to be 'repatriated' include letters, memoirs, newspaper cuttings, non-official correspondence, photos, and others. According to the Head of the Department of History, Archaeology, and Heritage Studies, Dr. Gift Kayira, so far, most of the documents received are from Scotland and display the work of Scottish missionaries and selected politicians who closely followed the events of the late 1950s and after. "Selected individuals in Scotland have been generous enough to release family records of parents who once worked in Malawi," he said. "Among others, we

have received records generated by such renowned individuals as Honourable Colin Cameron and Albert McAdam, both of whom were subscribed members of the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) and played significant roles in supporting African nationalism. For now, the papers are closed to the public until our partners from the library sort, refile, and digitize them for ease of access."

From UNIMA, the project is being coordinated by Dr Gift Kayira. Some assistance is being offered by Dr. David Bone, currently in Scotland and a former Senior Lecturer in the Theology and Religious Studies Department at UNIMA. Further assistance has been offered by Hon. Colin Cameron, a lawyer by training and the only surviving member of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda's first cabinet. Cameron sent the department his papers as well as those of his friends. Ms. Jessy Mphunda from the UNIMA library will assist the department in establishing a special archival collection for use by scholars.



A section of participants at the workshop

SHEAMA drills academics on ODeL Instructional Design

Representatives from UNIMA recently took part in a workshop, from 8th June, 2023 to 9th June, 2023, on Instructional Design at Amaryliss Hotel in Blantyre. The training was organised by Arizona State University, through the Strengthening Higher Education Access in Malawi Activity (SHEAMA) and USAID. The workshop was attended by representatives from a number of universities in the Southern Region of Malawi, including the University of Malawi, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) and Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS). These representatives included academics as well as ICT personnel. There was also representation from some government offices.

During the two days, there were discussions and activities related to the online delivery of teaching material at the

different institutions. The lead presenter from ASU, Dr. Kim Welch, highlighted the various methods of assessment that may be used online in order to provide the best learning experience for students. Her emphasis was on the need to align assessments with module content. She also addressed the matter of quality assurance in online delivery, highlighting a number of practices that serve to ensure that material delivered through online platforms remains of high standard. Another topic that was touched on was that of Artificial Intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, and the possible methods of engaging with them.

Dr. Frank Mtemang'ombe, Acting E-learning Director at UNIMA, points out that this training is part of an ongoing effort by the institution to instil skills for online teaching within its staff. "Developing instructional design skills for

e-learning is crucial for creating engaging, effective, and learner-centred online courses and programmes," he said. "So the training was designed to train e-learning champions from our five Schools, who would teach others and build communities of practice within their respective schools to enhance the overall learning experience, improve their course organisation and structure, align instructional activities with learning objectives, integrate technology appropriately, promote adaptation and flexibility, and facilitate continuous improvement."

UNIMA currently has all the necessary provisions for rolling out online learning. These range from skilled faculty and tech support, e-learning platforms (Moodle, Google Classroom, Zoom and Google Meet), and a pilot satellite centre in Mzuzu. According to Mtemang'ombe, the university is currently working on a technological innovation that will allow students access to online learning platforms (specifically Moodle) and resources (digital library) without using the internet. "This has already been piloted," he pointed out. "Starting with the ICT and Physics departments, we are now working on synchronising the UNIMA learning platform with this innovation. We hope that the School will take advantage of these available resources to offer their courses online."



UNIMA representatives pose for a photo



The Right Honourable Lord Chief Justice delivers his lecture

British Lord Chief Justice delivers lecture at UNIMA

The University of Malawi is recognized both locally and internationally as one of the top and leading universities. In line with this, on June 2nd, 2023, the School of Law, Economics, and Governance at the University of Malawi was honored with a visit from Lord Burnett of Maldon, the Right Honorable Lord Chief Justice of all the courts of England and Wales.

The function was hosted by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr Sunduzwayo Madise, and attended by various prominent Malawian judges and lawyers. Representatives from the Law Society, Supreme Court judges, the British High Commission to Malawi, lecturers from various UNIMA schools, as well as students attended the public lecture.

During the function, Lord Burnett addressed the theme “Judicial Independence and Accountability”. The talk emphasized the essential principles for judges to earn and maintain public trust. Lord Burnett further highlighted the importance of ensuring that judicial appointments are free from political influence and that judicial training remains independent of political control.

The public lecture also elaborated on the benefits of having independent courts. Lord Burnett emphasized that when judges deliver accessible, impartial, and

high-quality dispute resolution, it attracts businesses. He concluded by commending the Malawi Judiciary for their handling of the 2019 presidential elections case, stating that it provided ample evidence of the judiciary’s independence and professionalism.

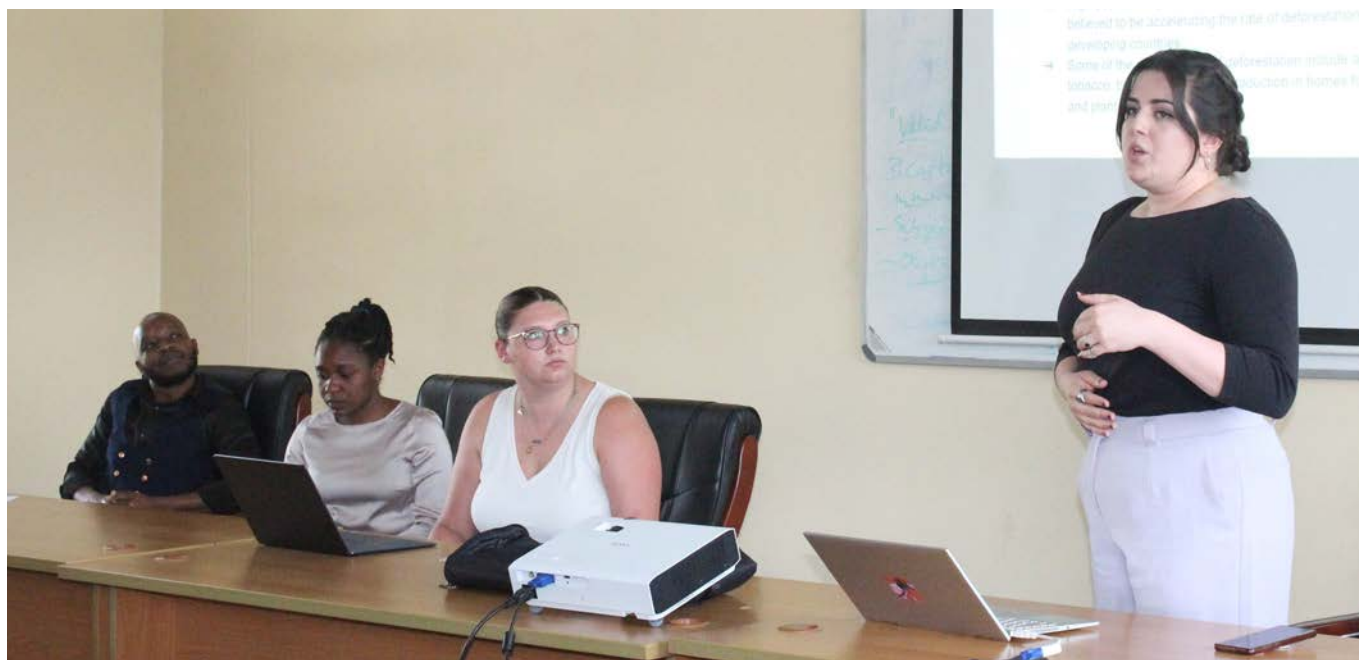
In his remarks, the UNIMA Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise, expressed his gratitude to Lord Burnett for choosing to come and deliver the public lecture as part of the Matembo Mzunda series at the University of Malawi. He

acknowledged that this opportunity has provided legal professionals and students with valuable experience and a chance to enhance their learning.

The Right Honorable Lord Burnett concluded his remarks by presenting the University of Malawi with an original document of the Magna Carta, a significant human rights document signed by the Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, the President of the United Kingdom Supreme Courts, the Master of the Rolls, and the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales.



The Deputy Vice Chancellor (2nd from right) engages with other members of the legal fraternity at the function



University of Maryland guests sharing insights on environmental advocacy

University of Maryland Engages with UNIMA on Environmental Advocacy

On May, 5th, 2023, the University of Malawi received visitors from the University of Maryland, who interacted with students from the School of Law, Economics and Government. The visitors from the University of Maryland included Prof. Peter G. Danchin, Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, William Piermatte, Managing Director of the Environmental Law Program, and 8 students.

During the visit to the University of Malawi, the visitors engaged in several activities. Students from both universities had a productive interactive session at the Law Boardroom, where they shared their

experiences related to environmental issues. Furthermore, students from the University of Maryland expressed their appreciation for UNIMA students' presentation of their clinic work and how they advocate for and address various issues in communities around Zomba.

Apart from the roundtable discussions, the students from the University of Maryland and UNIMA visited areas affected by Cyclone Freddy, such as Phalombe, Blantyre and Mulanje. The purpose of the visit was to propose solutions and policies that would protect the environment in these devastated areas.

Mr Chikosa Banda, Lecturer in the School of Law, Economics and Government, acknowledged the importance of this delegation. In an interview with Banda, he stated that the international visit from the University of Maryland had been planned with the aim of getting students from different sides of the globe to meet, and for them to appreciate environmental problems through such mutual interaction.

Furthermore, Mr. Banda mentioned that 11 students from the University of Malawi are expected to visit the University of Maryland in August this year. "This arrangement will continue for the next 5 years, ensuring ongoing international exchange opportunities between the two universities," he said.

The students and members of staff from the School of Law, Economics and Government had the privilege of attending a public lecture delivered by Professor Peter G. Danchin from the University of Maryland. During his presentation, Professor Danchin focused on the importance of environmental justice and urged the government to take the initiative to bring policy makers and stakeholders together.

The visitors also had an opportunity to visit some beautiful places and appreciate nature. They went hiking at Chawe in Zomba, and also visited Nkopola in Mangochi, where they marvelled at the beauty of Malawi.



An attentive audience at the Law boardroom



Ms. Monica Khombe delivers her lecture

MBS Public Relations Officer addresses students

As one way of exposing students to expertise in their disciplines, the University of Malawi invites various professionals from different public domains to equip students with skills and information crucial to their fields, preparing them to deliver accordingly in the industry.

On May 25th, 2023, the School of Arts, Communication and Design organized a public lecture on the theme 'A light path to your career.' The lecture was delivered by Ms. Monica Khombe, the Public Relations Officer for the Malawi Bureau of Standards. In her talk, Ms. Khombe explained the role of a Public Relations Officer (PRO) and the expectations that come with the position in an organization. She encouraged the students to join associations like the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA) to equip themselves with media skills that would also enhance their communication abilities. She emphasized that a competent PRO should possess skills enabling them to effectively represent their company. Ms. Khombe also emphasized the importance of utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and

WhatsApp, urging students to be sociable in these platforms to appreciate the work of the PROs.

In an interview with Ms. Khombe, she mentioned the importance of delivering this lecture to bridge the knowledge gap that students have regarding public relations. "As an alumna from this School, which has nurtured me to be where I am today, I thought it wise to share the knowledge that I have gained in the industry to students pursuing different programs," she explained.

The Head of the Department of Media and Communication Studies, Dr Anthony Gunde, explained that public lectures help students to obtain first-hand experience of what the industry expects them to deliver as one way of enhancing their future industry performance. "During the lecture, Ms. Khombe elaborated on skills that are required in the industry but are not in our curriculum. As such, this has opened the eyes of the department to revise the curriculum to incorporate the mentioned skills," he said.

The public lecture attracted many students from various departments. The lecture was also graced by lecturers from the School of Arts, Communication and Design, as well as graduates from the school.



Some of the students at the lecture

Kainja attends FOTN convention

The University of Malawi boasts research expertise in a variety of areas, which often results in its personnel being invited to share insights at fora within the country or outside. One of the contemporary areas of research that is currently attracting interest is that of the internet freedom. Mr Jimmy Kainja, a Senior Lecturer in the Media and Communication Studies Department, has been a well-known expert on matters of internet freedom. He recently travelled to Nairobi, Kenya, to attend Freedom House's *Freedom on the Net* (FOTN) report ratings review meeting (RRM), which took part from 18th to 19th May, 2023. Kainja has been a Malawi country researcher and analyst for FOTN since 2018. The FOTN is Freedom House's annual study and analysis of internet freedom worldwide. Freedom House is a non-profit organisation advocating for political freedom and human rights. It is based in Washington, USA.

The RRM brings together researchers from different African countries for peer review of research scores. A country's level of internet freedom is determined by the score on three categories: obstacle to internet access, freedom to access content on the internet, and violation of internet users' rights. The scoring of the countries in these categories determines whether



Kainja emphasizes a point during the function

they may be deemed free, partly free, or not free.

According to Kainja, in the last four years, Malawi has scored in the partly free category. It has done better in terms of freedom to access content on the internet, but struggled in the areas of obstacles to internet access and violation of users' rights. The Freedom House report states

that, in the past year, internet freedom has declined in Malawi, mainly indicated by state retaliation against journalists who have reported on corruption allegations. This has in turn led to increased self-censorship among journalists. On a positive note, the prices of internet packages were reduced, in the same period, and there is little to no evidence of state blocking of internet content.

You Are Not Alone: UNIMA Engages in Mental Health Awareness Campaign



A music performance at the Library Quadrangle

The University of Malawi prioritizes the welfare of its students, recognizing that their health is crucial for its overall excellence. In an effort to combat suicide cases on campus, on May 17th, 2023, the University of Malawi launched

a new initiative to raise awareness about mental health.

The Mental Health Awareness campaign featured music performances by the UNIMA Zembani Band and poetry

readings by UNIMA students. During the performances, various paintings and art, including portraits, were exhibited around the Library Quadrangle, capturing the attention of numerous students at the university. Students were able to catch a glimpse of these artworks while also absorbing the mental health awareness message delivered by the University Chaplain.

During the opening of the function, Mr Chimwemwe Malimba, the University Chaplain, expressed his gratitude to the University of Malawi Management for prioritizing Mental Health Awareness campaigns for the students. Mr Malimba encouraged the students to reach out to the University Chaplain and the University Counsellor whenever they experience fears, anxieties or apprehensions.

UNIMA Chemists attend Commonwealth Chemistry Congress



Dr Margaret Maoni and Dr Timothy Biswick, at the event in Trinidad and Tobago

achievements in chemistry. The Congress has a strong focus on early career chemists across the Commonwealth, with the aim of furthering their career development, enabling joint research and education activities, and providing networking opportunities to share research outputs.

During the Congress, Dr Timothy Biswick was one of the plenary speakers under SDG 6 and presented a paper titled “Malawi’s Strides in the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Successes, Challenges and Opportunities” while Dr Margaret Maoni presented a poster and flash presentation titled “Phytochemicals in commonly consumed food in Malawian diets”.

The lecturers appreciated the opportunity to engage with other scholars in their field. “Apart from giving us a platform for networking, the Congress afforded us the opportunity to appreciate how other chemists within the Commonwealth are using research to contribute towards the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals,” Dr Biswick pointed out.

Three members from the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Dr Timothy Biswick, Dr Margaret Maoni, and Ms Lucia Kabanga, attended the 2nd Commonwealth Chemistry Congress which was hosted by the University of West Indies St Augustine Campus, in Trinidad and Tobago, from 23-25 May 2023. This is a biennial event which is organized by the Federation of Commonwealth Chemical

Sciences Societies, a grouping of Chemical Societies from Commonwealth countries.

Bringing together chemists from across the Commonwealth under the banner of equality for all, the Congress was aimed at promoting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), strengthening scientific capacity, inspiring and elevating the role of the chemical sciences to society and policy makers, and celebrating

Third benchmarking trip for planned military college

During the period from 19th to 24th June 2023, a delegation from the University of Malawi (UNIMA) led by Professor Happy Kayuni, accompanied the Malawi Defence Force team, headed by General Vincent Nundwe, on a visit to the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. This visit marked the third international benchmarking exercise, part of the efforts towards establishing the Malawi National Defence College. Previously, the team had visited defense colleges in Kenya and the United States of America. Apart from Professor Kayuni, the UNIMA team also included Dr Ngcimezile Mweso, Dr Tiyesere Chikapa, Dr Enock Chilemba, and Mrs Towera Mwathunga.

The Defence Academy of the United Kingdom is a renowned British military institution dedicated to providing advanced professional development and strategic education to military personnel, civil servants, and international students. Its main objective is to enhance the intellectual

capacity and leadership skills of military and civilian personnel, enabling them to effectively address the complex challenges in defense and security. It serves as the primary provider of higher education and professional development for the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the armed forces. The Defence Academy offers a wide range of courses, programs, and research activities covering various aspects of defense and security. It provides academic qualifications, including postgraduate degrees, as well as tailored professional

development courses for military officers, defense professionals, and MOD civil servants. The Academy comprises several constituent colleges and schools, each specializing in different areas of study and training. Notable institutions within the Defence Academy include the Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS), Defence College of Management and Technology (DCMT), and Defence Academy Centre for Education and Research (DACER).



The Malawi delegation poses for a photo at the Defence Academy



Elias Seda, Enita Ebiyamu and Grasswell Mkanda working in the lab

UNIMA students harness nuclear science

A team of three students from the University of Malawi's School of Natural and Applied Sciences have been shortlisted in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Students' Competition on the Benefits of Nuclear Sciences: GC67. The first phase of the competition, announced in April this year, required students to develop an abstract for a project showing the utility of nuclear science to address some challenges facing their communities.

When the competition was announced, the three students, Mr. Elias Seda (Bachelor of Education – Physics), Ms. Enita Ebiyamu (Bachelor of Science in Chemistry – Honours) and Mr. Grasswell Mkanda (Bachelor of Science in Physics), formed a team and developed a proposal highlighting the utility of nuclear energy in relation to the agriculture sector as well as the environmental sector in Malawi and beyond.

The proposal from the team is entitled “The use of isotopic techniques in quantification of amount of nitrogen fertilizer applied to different types of crops in Malawi”. Specifically, the aim is to understand how various crops cultivated in Malawi utilise fertiliser by using isotopes of nitrogen (N-15) and phosphorus (P-32). The ideas developed in the proposal led to the team being among the 6 teams

shortlisted from Africa. For the next phase of the competition, the team has developed a short video presentation of their topic, which they have uploaded to YouTube for people to appreciate and support. Currently, the students are receiving assistance from the Department of Physics and Electronics in their preparation. The video may be accessed at <https://youtu.be/pFTFFen3TUA>

According to Ebiyamu, the project would be important for people to know the exact amount of fertilizer needed for specific plants. “This will help to ensure food security, through the production of good yields obtained from current amount of fertilizer,” she pointed out. “Additionally, it will help people to save money, because they will stop adding excess fertilizer to the soil, when plants only take up a specific amount. Lastly, it will help to protect our environment from damage. We know that if you add excess fertilizer to the soil, some of it penetrates through the soil into ground water, affecting the quality of water in general”.

Having been shortlisted, the students believe that this proves that the knowledge they obtain at UNIMA is good enough to compete with any other institutions globally. Additionally, they emphasize that

their participation in this competition is a good illustration of the practical use of classroom knowledge to the world.

The students' supervisor, Mr Vincent Peheliwa, is proud of his team. He promises to continue supporting the team in all aspects, so that the project can eventually be implemented. He acknowledges that this project has a huge potential impact for UNIMA and the country.

The top three teams will get to attend the 67th IAEA General Conference, which will be held in Vienna in September, 2023. The winners will have a discussion as a side-event at the conference, and will also have a chance to visit the laboratories and other facilities to do with nuclear technology.



Some of the equipment to be used



Award-winning students display their certificates

Outstanding students carry home awards

The University of Malawi is one of the best universities in Africa, well-known for its excellence. Part of this excellence emanates from the feats of the institution's students. Every year, the university recognizes its exceptional students who perform well in their academic studies. Their achievements are publicized through the Executive Dean's list, which is based on students' performances in the first semester of the academic year.

On May 17th, 2023, the University of Malawi awarded its top-performing students in the Great Hall. The ceremony was presided over by the Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Samson Sajidu. Executive Deans from all Schools, members

of staff, the President of the Students' Representative Council, and other students were present during the ceremony to celebrate with the top performers.

This year, the University of Malawi awarded certificates to its 172 outstanding students from various Schools. Out of these students, 21 were from the School of Law, Economics and Government, 74 were from the School of Natural and Applied Sciences, 50 were from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, 21 were from the School of Education and 6 were from the School of Arts, Communication and Design.

Additionally, during the same ceremony, UNIMA awarded its first ever Vice

Chancellor's Scholarship Award and the Vice Chancellor's Extraordinary Student Award. The scholarship was awarded to 11 male students and 3 females who performed with a GPA of 3.90 or above. They were presented with MK250,000. The Vice Chancellor's Extraordinary Student Award was presented to Pemphero Kampini. He received a certificate and MK250,000 for demonstrating a humanitarian spirit and excellent leadership skills throughout his academic studies.

In his speech, Professor Samson Sajidu, the Vice Chancellor, expressed his congratulations to all the awardees. He explained that the purpose of these awards is to celebrate students' accomplishments, foster a culture of excellence, and provide motivation and support for their ongoing success.

During the ceremony, the University also donated 32 Astria Tab gadgets to its financially disadvantaged students as a means of promoting equal access to education and academic excellence to all. The Director of Student Affairs, Dr Jonas Mwatseteza, handed over the gadgets to the selected students.

The following day, the Vice Chancellor hosted a luncheon for the 14 exceptional students at his residence.



The Vice Chancellor with students at the buffet luncheon



One of the students (2nd from right) receives her certificate

Law students granted excellence awards

Legal studies within the Malawi University's School of Law, Economics and Government are recognized locally and internationally for the rigorous training that students undergo. Those who graduate with Law degrees have been known to showcase their excellence beyond the university. It is in partially for this reason that the Law section within the school made an arrangement to honour some of the students who performed exceptionally. On 22nd May, 2023, the section honoured a number of students for their outstanding performance in their first-semester exams with excellence awards.

The function was attended by Professor Happy Kayuni, the Executive Dean of the School of Law, Economics and Government, Dr. Mweso, the Head of Public Law Department and Ms. Chisomo Kanyemba, the Managing Director at DNS Chambers. During the event, nearly 40 students received these excellence awards. The awards were given to the most improved students, star performers, and the representatives of the International Moot Court Competition. Among all the students, Teuka Tembo, a fourth-year

student who performed exceptionally, received legal regalia worth MK400,000 from Ms. Kanyemba.

Professor Kayuni congratulated all the students who were honoured with these awards. He acknowledged their rigorous commitment and the countless hours of studying that legal studies demand to achieve excellent grades. He also expressed gratitude to the staff members for their unwavering dedication and commitment to nurturing their students.

In an interview during the function,

Prof. Kayuni mentioned that it is crucial to recognize students who perform well, not only at the final level but also midway through their studies. This recognition encourages students to work harder.

The legal studies at UNIMA continue to raise the institution's flag high, as students achieve successes in various international activities. In April of this year, students from the Law department emerged victorious in an Inter-university Moot Court competition against the Catholic University of Malawi.



Cheering excellence awards



The UNIMA team displays their gold trophy

UNIMA triumphs at PUSSAM Festival 2023

Much as the University of Malawi is known widely for its provision of high-quality education, the institution has in the past years also registered successes in various extracurricular activities. Sports is one category where UNIMA's sportsmen, both staff and students, often bring home an array of medals and trophies. Among the recurring sports events where the institution often shines are the sports festivals where sportsmen from different universities get to compete, whether within Malawi or the SADC region.

UNIMA's sportsmen and women recently displayed their excellence once again, when they participated in the 3rd Public Universities Staff Sports Association (PUSSAM) festival, which was held at Mzuzu University on May 27th, 2023. The festival was organized under the theme of 'Strength in Togetherness', reflecting the comradeship that characterizes the games. PUSSAM comprises public universities and colleges such as UNIMA, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS), Mzuzu

University (MZUNI), Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHES). Over 300 sportsmen and women competed in various sporting codes including football, netball, darts, bawo, chess, nguli, athletics and draughts.

During the opening ceremony, Mr. Herbert Mpando, the President of PUSSAM, emphasized that the aim of these games is to bring individuals working in various universities together to socialize and share ideas. He urged all the participants not to view their opponents as competitors but as brothers and sisters.

UNIMA's impressive performance earned the admiration of the organizers, as they returned home with 19 medals from the games. The football and volleyball teams emerged champions, each taking home a gold trophy. The netball team secured second position, claiming a silver medal. The chess players also secured the second position, whereas draughts players managed to attain the third position. Bawo players managed to secure third place,

while pool players secured second place and athletics secured the third position. The award presentation featured captivating cultural dance performances from various universities during the night.

The UNIMA staff were overjoyed with their awards. Mr. Martin Likongwe, the President of the University of Malawi Sports Staff Association (UMSSA), expressed his gratitude to the university management for their unwavering financial support to all the sportsmen and women during their participation in Mzuzu. He also applauded the team for bringing home trophies and expressed his gratitude to all the sportsmen and women for their hard work, team spirit and commitment that made it possible for them to win all those trophies.

The organizers reminded the teams about the upcoming Southern African Universities Staff Sports Association (SAUSSA) games, which will be held at North West University, Mafikeng Campus, South Africa in December this year. As usual, University of Malawi intends to send its sportsmen and women to participate.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



As the semester ends, we look back on the previous two months, reflecting on some of the events that have affected members of staff and students at the University of Malawi campus.

One of the main events that has occurred is the migration of UNIMA Administration to the University Office. The Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Registrar and Acting Deputy Registrar are now housed there. The move is meant to be temporary, awaiting

the completion of the new administration block in March 2024.

The university has also recently appointed Gilbert Nyong'onya as Internal Auditor. We welcome him to the fold.

Following this move, there has been a shake-up in the portfolios of some Assistant Registrars. Mr Francis Machado is now Assistant Registrar – Postgraduate, whereas Mr Kumvenji Lamba is Assistant Registrar – Administration.

Sadly, there have been a few tragic events affecting members of our community. In the month of June, Mr Arnold Mboga of Centre of Language Studies lost his father. Ms Sungeni Kasoloka of the Education Foundations Department also lost her mother during the same month. It is also during this period that the campus lost Blessings Banda, a first year Bachelor of Education (Physics) student.