

UNIMA Bulletin



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Strengthening International Ties

What does it take for a university to be recognized as a high calibre institution?

There are different responses to this question. However, one of the standards that may be used to evaluate a university is the degree of internationalization in the activities of the institution. This enables one to examine the activities of the university in relation to other, similar institutions across the globe.

At the University of Malawi, there are so many ways in which we are achieving the internationalization goal. We do not even have to add the word 'International' to our name for it to reverberate across the globe.

Among other things, when we speak of internationalization at UNIMA, we highlight the fact that our university is not just some collection of buildings nestled at the foot of Zomba mountain. We do not regard our university as simply being defined by our physical campus, majestic and historical though it may be. Instead, we highlight our position not just as a Malawi's premier institution of higher learning, but rather a university that collaborates and competes with many of the best institutions internationally. The emphasis is our global position, not just the national one.

One way in which we have sought to strengthen the internationalisation factor is through opening up opportunities for

study for students from across the globe. Our undergraduate and postgraduate student population includes many who have chosen the University of Malawi for their studies. A glance at the student population at our campus reveals the presence and thriving of individuals from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique, but also the presence of those who have come to study here from as far as Macedonia, Norway and the United Kingdom. This is testament to the fact that our programmes are at par with, and sometimes better than, those from many other institutions across the globe.

We have collaborative agreements with a number of universities within the continent, as well as others in other continents. This facilitates student exchanges between UNIMA and the other institutions. The University of Malawi has also realized its internationalization aim through international partnerships with many other universities. We cannot list all the universities that we have partnerships with. However, as an example, in this issue of UNIMA Bulletin, we highlight how, in the last two months alone, UNIMA has hosted visits from representatives of Hiroshima University (Japan), Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (Kenya), and the Academy of Fine Arts (Vienna).

These partnerships have already started bearing fruit. Apart from the presence of students studying at UNIMA, this diversity also extends to our faculty. We have, among our staff, academics hailing from countries such as Zimbabwe, Kenya, Korea, United Kingdom. Our own staff also occasionally serve as visiting professors, keynote speakers or research fellows at various academic institutions across the globe.

Take note that all this is just about the internationalization factor. For us to detail the many other different ways in which we defend our claim to connecting with excellence, we would need much more space than this newsletter.

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A meeting of minds: UNIMA staff hold discussions with JKUAT delegates

UNIMA hosts Jomo Kenyatta University visitors

International collaborations have been a prioritized objective of the University of Malawi over the years. This priority aims to expose the institution's students and staff members to diverse knowledge from around the globe and attract international students to study at UNIMA. In line with this area of focus, The University of Malawi hosted visitors from the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) on 12th January 2024 for discussions on possible collaborations.

The visit began with a campus tour, starting from the new administration offices under construction, leading to the Great Hall, lecture theatres, and science laboratories. The delegates from JKUAT marveled at the beauty of UNIMA as they gazed upon the spectacular buildings around the campus. During the tour, the visitors explored some of the science laboratories, expressing admiration for the learning and teaching equipment they encountered. Upon entering the Brown Chipfamba Laboratory, Dr. Dalitso Kafumbata, Head of Biological Sciences Department, elaborated on some of the projects they are currently undertaking.

A meeting at the University Office boardroom with the University of Malawi Vice Chancellor, Prof. Samson Sajidu,

followed the campus tour. The meeting included representatives from JKUAT, led by their Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs), Prof. Robert Kinyua, representatives from JICA, the Deputy Vice Chancellor of UNIMA, Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise, the University of Malawi Registrar, Mr. Martin Matululu, the Deputy Registrar, Mr. Alfred Iteta Banda, Director of Student Affairs, Dr. Jonas Mwatseteza, and all the Executive Deans from the 5 UNIMA Schools, as well as heads of various science departments.

Prof. Sajidu extended his gratitude to the JKUAT delegates for visiting and considering UNIMA as a partner. He began by explaining the history of UNIMA to the delegates, outlining the progress the university has made in recent years. Prof. Sajidu also shared the bold new step UNIMA has taken by introducing the E-campus, offering 100% online bachelor's and postgraduate programs. He emphasized the university's commitment to inclusive education, highlighting the accommodation of students with special needs at UNIMA.

“Our desire is to enhance the student environment, aiming for 10% of UNIMA's students to be international. Another strategic vision UNIMA has is to provide

joint degrees with international universities and to develop strategies for international collaborative research,” he said.

He further mentioned some of the international universities UNIMA has collaborated with, including University of Dundee, Bath Spa University, and University of Rovuma, among others. He concluded by stating that the doors of UNIMA are wide open for international exchange, collaborations, and much more.

After the presentation, Prof. Kinyua explained that the visit aimed to explore various ways of collaborating with UNIMA, such as student exchange programs and credit transfer arrangements, among others. He further emphasized that student exchange is crucial as it enhances students' diverse ways of thinking, knowledge acquisition, and exposure to different cultures.

The visit concluded with another discussion at the New Economics Boardroom, where the delegates from JKUAT shared an overview of their university and the various programs they offer. The UNIMA Executive Deans and Heads of Department also shared some of the programs offered by their schools and expressed areas of potential collaboration with JKUAT.



The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Samson Sajidu, outlines potential areas of collaboration between UNIMA and other universities

UNIMA to collaborate with European universities

Students at the University of Malawi enjoy the opportunity to attend lectures at other reputable universities outside Malawi through the international collaboration that UNIMA has been fostering over the past years, providing students with access to a broader and more diverse learning experience. On 29th January, 2024, the University of Malawi, under the School of Arts, Communication, and Design, hosted visitors from some academic institutions in Europe, accompanied by staff members from the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS). This was followed by a meeting at the University Office, where the guests discussed potential collaboration opportunities with a team led by the UNIMA Vice Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu. Also present during the meeting were the Deputy Registrar, Mr. Alfred Iteta Banda, the Dean of the School of Arts, Communication, and Design, Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi, the Head of the Department of Fine Art, Dr. Grant Nthala, and members of staff from the Department of Fine Art.

The Vice-Chancellor extended his gratitude to the visitors for their visit to UNIMA. He introduced the history of UNIMA and also highlighted a number of strategic areas for potential collaboration, including the provision of joint degrees,

international collaborative research, capacitation of academic and research staff, and strengthening adherence to international standards.

“Your commitment to fostering global partnerships in education and the architectural programmes is commendable, and we are truly honored to be considered as a potential collaborator in this endeavor,” he stated. “In the field of academia, collaboration is the key to unlocking innovation and providing our students with a truly global education. By working together, we can create immersive and enriching experiences for our students, exposing them to a rich tapestry of artistic expressions from around the world,” he added, saying that the collaboration not only broadens students’ perspectives but also equips them with the skills and cultural intelligence needed to thrive in an interconnected world.

Professor Michelle P. Howard, a Professor of Art and Architecture and the leader of the Construction, Materials, Technology platform at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, began by explaining the history of art. She continued by emphasizing their interest in both architecture and art, highlighting how architecture encompasses both technical and artistic elements.

Professor Howard then stated that this perspective led them to deem it necessary to collaborate with three universities: UNIMA, MUBAS, and LUANAR.

Furthermore, Professor Howard addressed the issue of gender diversity. She encouraged the university management to strive for gender balance across all levels, among students as well as staff. Professor Howard further stated that achieving gender parity is one of their goals, and they are committed to bringing about this positive change.

“As part of our community outreach, we will introduce fellowships as one way of providing opportunities for students to engage in high-level research, thereby increasing access to higher education. Additionally, we will establish a powered digital environment,” she stated.

During the meeting, Mr. Gilbert Chilinde, Dean Emeritus from MUBAS, presented the idea of the partnership involving collaboration between universities in Europe and those outside Europe, with the aim of increasing access to higher education. He shared his personal experience after visiting one of the universities in Ireland and expressed his enthusiasm for initiating an exchange program at his university.

World Bank engages UNIMA academics on Malawi's economy



Mr Jakob Engel makes his presentation

The University of Malawi recently had the privilege of hosting World Bank officials who presented the findings of a report titled “A Narrow Path to Prosperity” on 28th February, 2024. This report, released every five years, examines the growth constraints and possibilities for Malawi. Jakob Engel, a Senior Economist at the World Bank, delivered the talk, which was attended by UNIMA academics, other members of staff, students, and the Executive Dean of the School of Law, Economics, and Government, Professor Happy Kayuni, representing the Vice Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu.

The report highlights that while Malawi's economy has shown growth over the past three decades, it has been significantly slower compared to other countries. Factors contributing to this slower growth include declining exports and rising imports, climate-related disasters, insufficient saving and investment, and a slow transition of workers from agriculture to industry. The report suggests solutions as well, including the role of the private sector in boosting exports and capitalizing on government policies.

Within his presentation, which was held in the Wadonda Lecture Theatre, Engel commented on the achievability of the

MW2063 goals, stressing the need for a significant shift in the way the economy is run towards greater emphasis on private sector investment.

Following the presentation, there was a panel discussion led by Dr. Winford Masanjala, Dr. Michael Chasukwa, Head of Politics and Government, and Dr. Kisu Simwaka, Director of Economic Policy and Research at the Reserve Bank. The panelists discussed the direction of Malawi's economy and engaged with the audience in a lively Q&A session. Students and staff members raised critical questions which mostly centered on devaluation and exports among other economic issues that were raised in the report, demonstrating their keen interest in the discussion and addressing Malawi's economic challenges.

Speaking after the event, Dr. Gowokani Chijere-Chirwa, Head of the Economics Department, said the event was important for the students as it provided a bridge between theory and practice.

“When students are here, they are exposed to theory,” he explained. “Bringing in external experts who have conducted studies like these helps students appreciate the link between theory and practice, exposing them to potential solutions for our economy before they enter the job market.”

Commenting on the talk, Dr. Chasukwa described it as crucial, expressing optimism that if recommendations in the report were implemented Malawi could overcome its economic challenges.



There was a high level of participation from the audience



Mr Gift Whayoh, Director of Zipatso Ltd (left) at the site with Mr Benson Mabvumbe, UNIMA Liaison Officer

Zipatso Ltd to restore UNIMA's Chirunga football ground

In an era where corporate social responsibility has become paramount, visionary industry leaders are stepping forward to make meaningful contributions in various communities within the country. One such individual is Mr Gift Whayoh, the Director of Zipatso Construction Limited, whose recent initiative to renovate University of Malawi's Chirunga football ground is not just a project, but a testament to the impact of corporate conscience.

The project of renovating the Chirunga football ground started on 15th February, 2024. While addressing the University of Malawi management officials present at the Chirunga football ground, Mr. Whayoh emphasized the importance of having a well-maintained football ground for both students and the community. He further mentioned that the ground would help students to relax after rigorous assignments, and communities would also have time to refresh their bodies and minds after their everyday duties. The company has brought its state-of-the-art earth-moving equipment to the site to ensure that the work is professionally done. Among some of the tasks to be completed are leveling the ground and planting grass to enhance its appearance, all meant to ensure that footballers shall have a quality

experience when participating in their games.

"As one way of giving back to the community, we decided to maintain the Chirunga football ground, as it will not only assist the students but also benefit surrounding communities," Whayoh said.

The UNIMA Vice Chancellor, Prof. Samson Sajidu, extended his gratitude to Zipatso Construction Limited for their outstanding commitment to the University and the entire community. He further emphasized that the transformation of the Chirunga football ground is not merely about physical upgrades but also

symbolizes an investment in the well-being of both students and staff members.

"Zipatso Construction Limited has not only enhanced recreational opportunities for our students and staff but has also fostered a sense of belonging and unity," he said. "Such initiatives resonate deeply within our institution, reinforcing the values of collaboration and progress."

He concluded by acknowledging the contribution made by Zipatso, as their actions reflect a shared vision for a better tomorrow, where corporate entities actively engage in uplifting communities and enriching lives.



Some of the equipment brought by Zipatso Ltd to the site



Mr Masamba (far right) hands over the equipment

UNIMA receives gadgets from Move Secure Africa

In the swiftly advancing technological era, universities have embraced new learning methods through diverse online platforms. On January 4, 2024, Move Secure Africa donated two laptops, two headphones, and two routers, valued at MK4,600,000, to the University of Malawi. Among the two beneficiaries, Mr. James Mkali Phiri, a third-year Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences student, and Mr. Samuel Chiumia, a fourth-year student enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Social Studies) programme, each received a laptop and headphones from the generous donation.

The handover ceremony, held in Chief Mwambo Lecture Theatre, was graced by the Director of Student Affairs, Dr Jonas Mwatseteza, and the Managing Director of Move Secure Africa, Mr. Patrick Masamba. Other persons present during the ceremony included the procurement officer, Mr. George Pahuwa, the Student Representative Council President, Mr. Thanks Mwalwanda, representatives from the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) department, and students.

Dr. Mwatseteza extended his gratitude to Mr. Masamba for the timely donation of laptops to UNIMA. He stated that the university has students who lack gadgets

for their academic studies, leading to poor performance. Students fail to submit their assignments and also miss some lessons offered on online platforms like Google Classroom. Additionally, he elaborated on some of the challenges students are facing, including issues with upkeep.

“Some students have gadgets, but they are not in good condition. Only a few students possess gadgets that operate without any challenges. We urge various companies to follow the example of Move Secure Africa and assist us with new or used laptops, as well as funds that will enable us to purchase laptops and distribute them to our students,” he stated.

In his remarks, Mr. Masamba stated that Move Secure Africa was prompted to donate gadgets to the University of

Malawi due to a sense of social corporate responsibility. They believe it is essential to provide laptops to students in need. He further urged companies in Malawi to support university students with various items to enhance their academic success.

Upon receiving his laptop, Mr. Samuel Chiumia expressed how challenging his academic journey has been with the old laptop whose battery was not dependable. He expressed gratitude to Move Secure Africa for donating the laptops and urged them to continue assisting those in need. He concluded by highlighting that, as a fourth-year student, he understands how challenging it is to pursue education without a laptop. Mr. Chiumia stated that, upon completing his studies, he plans to donate the laptop to a less privileged student who is in need.



The donated equipment



Participants engage in the tree planting exercise

Chanco Radio in Tree Planting Exercise

Every year, Malawi holds the National Tree Planting Season which is aligned with the rainy season and usually runs from December to April.

In accordance with this season, a group of women who call in on Chanco Community Radio's *Bwalo la Amayi*, a radio phone-in programme which provides women with a platform for the discussion of various issues affecting their lives, organises tree planting initiatives every year in conjunction with various organisations and the radio station.

This year, as part of the 2023-2024 tree planting season, the exercise was carried out on 11th January, 2024. The women planted over 250 trees at Nsema Village in the area of Sub Traditional Authority Chimbalanga in Zomba District. This was with the assistance of Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM) Zomba Chapter and Energy and Environmental Centre (EEC). WESM provided the women with the tree seedlings which were planted at a reserved site in the village.

In her remarks, EEC's Lucy Kataika said the organisation felt duty-bound to support the *Bwalo la Amayi* women's group in this cause for this is one of the measures of countering climate change.

"This is one way of environmental protection and management, which is very important in ensuring that we are putting in place measures to counter climate change," Kataika said.

Assistant Forestry Officer for Zomba District, Jean Chibambo, who was also present at the tree planting exercise, commended the women for engaging in this initiative.

"It is women who most directly use trees for firewood. As such, it is only proper for them to take an active role in planting trees. I encourage other women to emulate

this in their communities," said Chibambo.

President of *Bwalo la Amayi*, Emily Tizola, echoed Chibambo's statement by asking women to take part in the restoration of the environment in their areas by planting more trees.

Chanco Community Radio supports the initiatives by approaching and coordinating with various organisations to support the women with tree seedlings and by providing transport for the seedlings from where they are sought to the appointed planting sites.



Participants dancing with Chanco Radio personnel



Creating futures: HHI students in one of UNIMA's magnificent lecture theaters

HHI Students' Visit to UNIMA: Inspiring Academic Ambitions

The University of Malawi is undoubtedly a significant source of inspiration for many secondary school students in Malawi. This is evident in the numerous students from different schools who regularly visit the esteemed university for inspiration. The latest visitors to the University of Malawi campus in Zomba comprised of a group of 215 Form 4 students from Henry Henderson Institute, led by Mr. Moses Chanza, the Deputy Head Master of the school. The students, who visited UNIMA on 3rd February 2024, are set to sit for their MSCE exams this year. This marks the second time the Deputy Head Master has brought MSCE candidates to UNIMA for inspiration, a strategy, according to him, that has proven to be beneficial as, last year alone, a total of 60 students from the school were selected into various public universities as a result of the motivation.

The visit, hosted by Mr. Grey Chasuka from UNIMA's marketing and communication team, commenced with welcoming remarks from Dr. Jonas Mwatseteza, the Director of Student Affairs, at the Chikowi Lecture Theatre. It was a moment of encouragement for the students, offering insights into university life and the programs UNIMA provides.

Dr. Mwatseteza encouraged the students to work hard, follow their teachers' guidance, and pursue higher education at UNIMA.

Mr. Rashid Phiri and Ms. Uchizi Chavula, UNIMA's student ambassadors, shared their experiences and provided more information about their study programs, giving the visiting students a glimpse of life at UNIMA as a student. Following the presentations, the HHI students and staff members were taken on a tour by Mr. Chasuka, who introduced the university's state-of-the-art teaching facilities across its schools.

At the School of Law, Economics, and Government, the visitors were welcomed by Professor Happy Kayuni, the Executive Dean, and Dr. Gowokani Chijere-Chirwa, the Head of the Department of Economics. Prof. Kayuni highlighted the job opportunities available to graduates of different programmes offered by the school. He also clarified misconceptions about certain programmes and outlined the requirements for one to study in his school.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Chanza expressed gratitude to UNIMA management for allowing the students to

explore the university facilities and interact with its staff members. He is optimistic that this visit will inspire the students to excel, anticipating a higher university enrollment this year. The school plans to bring another group of Form 4 learners next year.

Mr. Chasuka extended thanks to the HHI administration for choosing UNIMA again for academic inspiration, highlighting that it underscores the public's high regard for the University, solidifying its position as the people's choice and a standard-setter.



Mr Moses Chanza, Deputy Headmaster of HHI



Guests from Hiroshima University attend a presentation at the School of Education

School of Education hosts Hiroshima University guests

At the University of Malawi, students often have the opportunity to interact with both fellow students and staff members from various international universities, which aids in their learning and gaining of valuable knowledge from scholars and peers worldwide. UNIMA regularly hosts visitors from these universities, so they can appreciate the campus infrastructure, student life as well as programmes offered. Recently, on 26th February 2024, the School of Education welcomed visitors from Hiroshima University. The guests included 3 staff members and 10 undergraduate students.

The aim of the visit was for the students to learn more about the University of Malawi as well as the culture of Malawi in general. The visit commenced with a university tour, during which the guests from Hiroshima marveled at the campus's beauty, particularly the lecture rooms and university library, among other facilities. Throughout the tour, students from both universities interacted, sharing their respective experiences.

After the tour, an enthralling presentation was delivered by Dr. Annie Chiponda, the Head of the Department of Curriculum and Teaching Studies (Social Studies and Language), in the boardroom of the School of Education. In her presentation, she focused on the political, social, and

economic history of Malawi from 1891 to the present. She provided a brief overview of Malawi, its journey to independence, and the history of education in the country. Additionally, she elaborated on the history of the University of Malawi, offering insights for the visitors to appreciate the institution's legacy.

In his speech during the function, the Dean of the School of Education, Dr. Peter Namphande, provided information on the partnership between UNIMA and Hiroshima University. He highlighted the main pillars of collaboration outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the two universities in 2021. These pillars include a reciprocal student exchange programme involving academic and cultural visits, as well as the provision of online learning programmes.

Namphande further stated that currently, a student in the School of Education at UNIMA is pursuing his Master's degree at Hiroshima University under a scholarship provided by the Japanese government. Additionally, he mentioned that Hiroshima University offers certificate courses online, providing numerous students from UNIMA with the opportunity to learn, and Hiroshima University covers the expenses.

“Collaborations like these provide a valuable link for the School of Education at UNIMA

to learn from international universities and offer members of staff the opportunity to engage with international scholars, discussing areas of common interest for potential research collaborations,” he said. “Such exchanges also allow our students to connect with their international peers, facilitating the exchange of views that may lead to additional opportunities in the future.”



Interaction between students of UNIMA and Hiroshima University



Dr. Boniface Dulani (left), the Director of Surveys at Afrobarometer

UNIMA appointed as Afrobarometer Survey Support Unit

In a landmark development, the University of Malawi has been selected as the latest survey support unit for Afrobarometer, a prestigious pan-African research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, the economy, and society. This strategic partnership marks a new era of collaboration between UNIMA and Afrobarometer, aimed at advancing research excellence and impactful engagement across the continent.

In its report dated 21st February 2024, the research network, which is headquartered in Ghana, announced the partnership which will see UNIMA supporting the Afrobarometer in data collection, analysis, and dissemination while fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration among Afrobarometer's partners including UNIMA's Centre for Social Research (CSR) which serves as a National Partner to Afrobarometer, responsible for survey activities in Malawi.

The Department of Politics and Government, under the School of Law, Economics, and Government at UNIMA will house the new support unit. According to Dr. Boniface Dulani, the Director of Surveys at Afrobarometer, the Survey Unit will among other things; oversee Afrobarometer's survey operations; provide capacity building for data collection and analysis; and provide training for partners, journalists,

legislators, civil society representatives, and students on how to collect, analyze, and communicate public opinion data.

UNIMA's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu, said that the establishment of the Afrobarometer survey support unit marks an important milestone in recognizing UNIMA's contribution to survey research in Malawi and across Africa.

"Through this support unit, UNIMA will not only be at the forefront of pioneering innovations in survey research, but it will further serve as an important hub for building research capacity across the African continent," he said.

The Executive Dean of the School of Law, Economics, and Government, Professor Happy Kayuni, acknowledged the benefit that this collaboration will bring to UNIMA, stating that the University and the Department will expand its network within the region and beyond. "The appointment of UNIMA as Afrobarometer's Survey Unit is also aligned with the internationalization agenda that UNIMA is vigorously pursuing. The footprint of both UNIMA and the Department of Politics and Government will definitely be strengthened."

This development comes as good news not only to the University and the department but to UNIMA students as well. Dr. Michael Chasukwa, Head of the Department of

Politics and Government, emphasizes the involvement of students in the activities of the survey support unit.

"Students will be involved in some of the activities of the survey support unit. The unit has an element of capacity building and students will be trained in different aspects of the survey including questionnaire development, managing fieldwork, data analysis, and dissemination strategies. The aim is to boost, develop, and strengthen survey skills not just for UNIMA students but also for students in other African universities," he said.

The involvement of UNIMA students in the survey unit's activities highlights the university's dedication to nurturing the skills of future researchers and professionals. Through participation in various aspects of the survey processes, students stand to gain hands-on experience in real-world research settings. This engagement will not only enrich their academic journey but also equip them with valuable skills that are highly sought after in both academic and professional contexts. Additionally, by extending this opportunity beyond UNIMA to students in other African universities, the survey unit contributes to the broader goal of enhancing research capacity and fostering collaboration across the continent.

Female scholars acquire grant proposal writing skills

As the University of Malawi desires to enhance research output among all staff members, several experienced scholars have undertaken various initiatives aimed at equipping their colleagues with skills for advancing their academic careers. In support of this objective, the Head of Research, Dr. Maurice Monjerezi, conducted a Research Master Class entitled “The Art of Writing Grant Proposals”. The seminar had the specific goal of assisting female academic scholars in developing grant writing skills.

Female scholars from various departments within UNIMA actively participated in the two-day seminar, both in person and online. The seminar took place at the School of Law, Economics, and Government’s Boardroom on 19th and 20th February 2024.

During the seminar, Dr. Monjerezi highlighted that the Grant Writing classes serve as refresher courses, offering staff the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills in grant proposal writing by learning from experienced colleagues. The event featured presentations from various speakers, including Dr. Evance Mwathunga, Dr. Edister Jamu, Dr Boniface Dulani, and others, who delivered



UNIMA female academics immersed in discussions on proposal writing

insightful presentations to the female staff. Topics covered during the seminar included navigating rejection and resubmission, research impact and dissemination, research project management and timeline development, as well as the impact of AI in literature review on research.

“Additionally, the classes serve as a platform for interaction, idea sharing, and the formation of long-term research groups,” Monjerezi emphasized. “This facilitates staff members in effectively responding to calls for research proposals.”

The enthusiasm for learning and acquiring additional knowledge in grant writing was evident throughout the seminar, as female

scholars continuously posed questions and engaged actively with the presenters. There was a significant level of interest generated around the utilization of AI tools in grant proposal writing, particularly in tasks such as composing a literature review and formulating a research problem.

Dr. Monjerezi expressed appreciation for the participation and the strong turnout of the female scholars, both those who attended in person and online. He also encouraged Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to take full advantage of these seminars and actively participate in upcoming sessions.

Two Decades of Excellence: Farewell to Mr. Masumbu

On 6th February 2024, the legal fraternity at UNIMA bid farewell to Mr. James Masumbu, one of the Law lecturers who has served the University of Malawi for 20 years. Mr. Masumbu’s journey with UNIMA began in 2004.

Masumbu expressed gratitude for the wonderful experience he has had with staff members and students throughout his years of lecturing at UNIMA. He further mentioned that he had a delightful experience with Law students due to their activeness in class, which also compelled him to be fully prepared before delivering lessons to them.

“One of my memorable experiences included lecturing to students with special needs, especially those who had poor

eyesight. This presented challenges in bringing students with special needs to the same level as the other students. The experience left a lasting impression on me,” Masumbu said.

Apart from sharing his memorable experiences, Masumbu mentioned some of the achievements he has accomplished during his journey. Among these achievements were the publication of his papers, which have been utilized by various lecturers during their lesson delivery. He continued by stating that obtaining a Master’s degree in LLM in Commercial Law while working full-time as a lecturer with the department was another significant achievement. Furthermore, he fondly recalled being part of the team of lecturers that worked on the Diploma in



Mr. James Masumbu

Law Programme in 2005. He added that it was pleasing to note the programme’s growth both in numbers and impact.

Among other positions he served was being the Head of Practical Legal Studies on two occasions, first from November 2004 to 2006, and later from 2021 to 2023.



One of the programmes being presented to the audience

School of Natural and Applied Sciences to launch new postgraduate programmes

One of the reasons why the University of Malawi is held in high regard in the region is the number and quality of academic programmes that the institution offers. As a dynamic institution, the University is constantly introducing new programmes and updating its current ones in reaction to international trends and industry needs.

Recently, on 17th January, 2024, the School of Natural and Applied Sciences hosted a meeting with various stakeholders as a step towards the introduction of three new programmes: the PhD in Water and Environment, MSc in Physics and MSc in Electronics. The meeting was held at Nkopola Lodge in Mangochi. These programmes are being introduced as a result of stakeholder pressure, following previous needs assessment exercises carried out by the School.

Over 40 stakeholders were present at the meeting. They included representatives from Government ministries and departments, including those of Water and Sanitation, Forestry, Agriculture, Climate Change and Meteorological Services; academics from Malawi University of Science and Technology, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural

Resources and Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences; personnel from all the Water Boards in the country, and other experts.

The Executive Dean of the School of Natural and Applied Sciences, Prof. Cosmo Ngongondo, is excited about the programmes. “The Physics and Electronics programmes are the first of their kind at a public university in Malawi and have strong innovation and industrialization elements, in line with MW 2063 and Africa 2063,” he said. “The PhD programme is well aligned with MW 2063 enablers and

the National Research Agenda theme on Environmental Sustainability and builds on our existing MSc programmes in Water Science and Management and MSc in Environmental Sciences. All programmes will contribute to the UNIMA strategic direction of expanding access to education by increasing student numbers.”

According to Prof. Cosmo Ngongondo, the School is ready to roll out all three programmes, as soon as some final fine tuning is done, as a way of accommodating some of the suggestions from the meeting.



Participants pose for a picture



Dr. Namphande's presentation underway in the School of Education Boardroom

School of Education hosts discourse on primary school riots

Student activism in Africa has historically been prominent in universities and occasionally in secondary schools. However, in Malawi, the emergence of multiparty democracy in the 1990s brought about a surge in cases of student activism in secondary schools. In more recent years, primary school students in Malawi have also been making headlines by taking to the streets in protest on various issues. This shift from the typical landscape of student activism in the education sector has raised questions about the underlying causes of such incidents. On 24th January, 2024, Dr. Peter Namphande, Executive Dean of the School of Education, presented his recent research, examining the factors behind primary school student riots.

The talk by Dr. Naphande focused on a unique case involving Standard 8 primary school pupils, who staged riots to protest against the relocation of a Standard 8 teacher that they held in high regard. The study aimed to unravel whether these disturbances were a manifestation of genuine young citizen activism, with the pupils' voices being marginalized, or if there was an element of manipulation by teachers as a form of resistance to the relocation.

In his presentation of the findings of the research, the presenter observed that the pupils expressed grievances similar

to those seen in higher education and secondary schools. The research therefore suggests that, despite their age, these young pupils might have been influenced by broader societal issues and perceptions of injustice.

“What prompted me to undertake this research study is my keen interest in issues related to student activism, students' rights, and democracy in education,” Dr. Namphande said. “After learning about a riot at a particular school, I became intrigued and decided to conduct the research. When I visited the school, I initially thought the riots were related to student activism, as that was my primary focus. To my surprise, I discovered that it was more of a conflict among teachers, and the students were merely victims who reacted to being victimized.”

The research called for a closer examination of the power dynamics between teachers, students, administrative authorities, and surrounding communities in both primary and secondary schools. The findings also highlight the importance of addressing grievances among students, irrespective of their age, to foster a more inclusive and participatory educational environment.

The seminar was followed by a session of questions and answers from both the attendees who were physically present

and those who participated online. Mr. Cobbener Sungani, an Instructor in the Department of History, Archaeology, and Heritage Studies, who attended the seminar in person, expressed how insightful it was.

“As a young scholar, I've learned that seminar presentations demand meticulous research, involving the careful selection of theoretical frameworks and appropriate methods for data collection,” he said. “The presenter exemplified this by conducting thorough research on the topic and presenting well-supported claims. Feedback obtained at such seminars can help to strengthen one's paper, incorporating or adjusting elements based on the insights contributed by fellow scholars.”



Dr. Peter Namphande



Lipenga and Mtenje responding to Ntsoele's presentation

Exploring South African music: The popular Amapiano genre

Recently, staff and students at the University of Malawi had the opportunity to delve into the immensely popular Amapiano music genre through a presentation held on January 8, 2024, at the Mwambo Lecture Theatre. Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi, the Executive Dean of the School of Arts, Communication, and Design, hosted Ms. Thandi Ntsoele, an English Education Inspector from Gauteng, South Africa, who delivered a mesmerizing presentation.

As a self-professed music enthusiast, Ms. Ntsoele guided the audience through a comprehensive exploration of South African music culture, spanning from 1920 to the present day. While acknowledging the evolution of music genres, she emphasized that South African music has remained consistent over the past century, considering Amapiano a continuation of earlier music genres.

Continuing with her presentation, Ms. Ntsoele stressed that Amapiano, known for its dynamic dance and rhythm, is associated with a subculture characterized by distinctive streetwear and lifestyle. She further stated that the origins of Amapiano, which started around 2010, trace back to Maero and Force Reloaded (MFR), who crafted the genre. Ms. Ntsoele continued by underscoring the importance of conducting the seminar for UNIMA students, especially those pursuing courses

like drama and music. She highlighted that the seminar not only provides a solid background in music but also inspires attending students to explore and enhance their creativity.

After the presentation, there was a conversation that included two discussants, Prof. Ken Lipenga and Dr. Asante Mtenje from the Department of Literary Studies, who provided well-thought-out comments and raised thought-provoking questions. The discussion actively engaged both the presenter and the diverse audience, which included students, lecturers, and other staff members. One of the questions raised was whether South Africans feel other countries are stealing their sound and style, to which the presenter responded that South Africans are happy that what they created is booming across the world.

Dr. Emmanuel Ngwira, the Executive Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, concurred with the point concerning difficulties that local music genres encounter in gaining international traction, particularly when compared to South African genres in Malawi. He highlighted the importance of leveraging and creatively evolving local music genres to establish a modern, internationally appealing brand for Malawi.

The presentation was not just informative but also lively. The presenter consistently used music videos to emphasize her points, prompting the audience to silently move their shoulders and nod appreciatively to the familiar songs. The event also included performances by the UNIMA-based Zebras Band and a captivating dance performance by Tamara Ntsoele.



A group photo opportunity at the end of the event



Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi promotes the new programmes in the School of Arts, Communication and Design

Fresh interest in UNIMA's arts programmes

In a world constantly evolving and embracing creativity, the School of Arts, Communication, and Design at the University of Malawi has unveiled six exciting new arts programmes that delve into the realms of drama, film production, fine art, music, fashion design, and creative arts. These new programs are set to provide students with the opportunity to explore their passion and hone their talents, empowering artists with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in today's dynamic arts industry.

During a board meeting held in Mulanje at Nalipiri Lodge on 22nd February 2024, the Executive Dean, Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi, expressed excitement about the six programmes introduced in his school, which will enroll 240 students. Each program will admit 40 students.

"I am excited because these new programmes are a game-changer in the arts industry of Malawi," he said, highlighting that students will specialize in these autonomous programmes from their first year until their fourth year. "The programmes offer a good balance of theory and practice, and part of the training will include internships and attachments, forming a crucial part of the curriculum."

Magalasi further mentioned that the school has created an implementation plan which runs from 2023 to 2028. Among the achievements they have made are the creation of departments, appointment of department heads, and the development of new curricula. Additionally, he said the school is now considering recruiting local and international staff from various countries, including Germany, Kenya, Nigeria, among others, who are ready to contribute to this endeavor. He further stated that the new programmes are a relief to the school, as there has been high demand from artists for these programs.

Magalasi concluded by clarifying the importance of the new programs in his school, stating that they will prepare individuals to compete internationally. He also highlighted the numerous collaborations the school has with international universities, emphasizing their readiness to engage in productions, exhibitions, and fashion fairs.

The school has appointed two external board members who are well-experienced in the arts: Mr. Charles Shemu Joya, a celebrated Malawian filmmaker, and Mrs. Musonda C. Mitchell, proprietor of Swift Sew Tailoring School. During the

board meeting, they both shared their ideas and expressed excitement about the introduction of the new programmes and their readiness to collaborate with the School of Arts, Communication, and Design.

Joya, who is behind films such as *The Road to Sunrise* and *The Last Fishing Boat*, among others, stated that integrating professionals like himself into the board will elevate students' skills, as they will gain hands-on knowledge and experience through interaction.

"The idea of specialization in these programmes is very important because it means that graduates will emerge with well-honed skills, rather than being general practitioners," he said.

The Heads of Department also shared their excitement about the new programmes introduced in their school. They clarified that this development marks the first time in history to have such programmes, creating an opportunity for students to sharpen their talents. They further mentioned that the programmes are crucial since they will give a chance for students who are naturally gifted to hone these talents, which will ultimately be beneficial for the nation.



Commercial Law students pose for a picture with their lecturers

Commercial Law PG students undergo orientation

On 25th January, 2024, the School of Law, Economics and Government welcomed the 13th cohort of Master's Commercial Law students who are about to commence their studies. The orientation commenced with the Programme Coordinator, Mr. Samuel Kaphuka, congratulating the 14 students who qualified for the programme. He mentioned that the programme started in 2012 and noted that the cohort had increased in number of enrolled students, compared to previous years. Mr. Kaphuka continued by highlighting the rules students were supposed to observe in order to have a seamless learning and research experience.

“The aim of the program is to disseminate expert knowledge in the field of commercial law, recognizing its growth as a discipline. Additionally, it acknowledges the crucial role of commercial law in the social-economic context in which people operate,” he stated.

He further shared the objectives of the programme, emphasizing that it provides students with in-depth knowledge and understanding of the legal fundamentals of international business and finance, among other key areas.

The Head of the Private Law Department, Dr. Bernadetta Malunga, welcomed the students with great delight. She emphasized that they should not feel like strangers but should consider the department as their home. Dr. Malunga further explained the mode of teaching delivery, highlighting that the programme is mostly online. However, she urged the students to be physically present on campus, and should visit the library regularly to fully utilize the conducive academic environment.

“The programme is quite demanding due to the mode of delivery. I urge you to dedicate your time to all the lessons, regardless of other responsibilities you may have,” she said, emphasizing that as students, they should be disciplined and must also balance their time well between work, school, family, and social activities.

Mrs. Felister Francisco, a first-year Master's student, expressed her excitement about being part of the cohort. She mentioned that she joined a corporate organization and believes that pursuing a Master's in Commercial Law will provide her with a platform to broaden her knowledge and establish a foundation for building her career as a corporate lawyer.

“Aside from obtaining the certificate, my expectations include building intensive knowledge on issues that affect corporate governance, corporate finance law, and company law issues,” she said.

The orientation concluded with a presentation from Prof. Garton Kamchedzera, who spoke on competence, credits, and credit hours. Lastly, a question and answer session followed, during which students sought clarification on various issues concerning the programme.



Discussions between the new Commercial Law cohort and staff



Participants about to start the marching

Law students advocate for green spaces

Participating in various events that benefit communities and the country is one of the paramount activities students at the University of Malawi engage in, which also offers them an opportunity to interact with other influential people who have similar goals. This is also one way in which the university gives back to the community. As part of raising awareness on the need to conserve the environment and ensure green spaces are protected, some students studying Law, under the Environmental Justice and Sustainability Clinic, joined various organizations on 24th February 2024 in a Green Spaces Initiative and Outreach that was organized by Coordination Union for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE) and other organizations. The event was held at Njamba in Blantyre.

During the event, various activities took place, including the recitation of poems, waste collection, a tree planting exercise at Njamba and a solidarity march around Blantyre city. The march commenced from Kamuzu Stadium, proceeded through the Masauko Chipembere Highway to Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, then turned at Kamba to Chitawira before returning to Njamba park. As participants marched, awareness messages were conveyed to the public through placards and songs.

Following the successful tree planting exercise and awareness campaign, the Board Chairperson for Coordination

Union for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE), Mr Mernard Nyirenda, stated that the event was organized to urge the government and other stakeholders to rehabilitate green spaces. He continued by stating that such spaces not only contribute to providing clean air but also have the potential to generate revenue if developed and managed properly.

Celebrating the active participation of law students who attended the function, the president of Environmental Justice and Sustainability Clinic, Jeffrey Pascal

(4th year student) stated that the outreach brings together people of different fields and expertise that ensures that there is an interdisciplinary approach towards achieving environmental sustainability. Pascal added that the initiative reinforces Section 4 of the Environment Management Act, which stresses that every individual has the duty to protect the environment.

“Participating in such activities also provides a learning opportunity to students and at the same time it gives them a chance to share their knowledge on saving the environment,” Pascal said.



Participants march with placards and songs

Leaders in eloquence: UNIMA students selected as Lex: lead essay competition winners



Mr. Benson Bandawe



Ms. Ronica Kuthakwanasi

The University of Malawi consistently demonstrates excellence through its students and staff members, earning recognition both locally and internationally. In recent news, Mr. Benson Bandawe, a third-year student, and Ms. Ronica Kuthakwanasi, a second-year student, both pursuing a Bachelor of Laws (Honors), have emerged as winners in an international essay competition organized by Lawyers for Economic Advancement and Development (Lex:lead).

The essay competition, which annually attracts law students from over 50 countries, required participants to submit essays on the topic: “How Effective Have Laws Protecting the Rights of Children been to Reduce Poverty and Support Economic Development? How could they be improved?”

These two students are the only Malawians among the 16 winners of the competition. Mr. Benson Bandawe’s essay secured the top position, as evaluated by an international panel of judges, lawyers, and academics. The 16 winners will receive a cash prize of \$500 each to support their educational expenses. This achievement also presents an opportunity for them to become Lex:lead ambassadors, representing Lex:lead as valuable resources for other eligible students and facilitating liaisons with universities or other institutions.

“Having emerged as number 1 in the Lex:lead 2023 legal essay competition, I feel very grateful to God Almighty, knowing fully well that there were over 50 countries competing and more than 108 essays had been submitted globally from competent law students. It gives me great confidence and high self-esteem to take part in many more challenging competitions,” said Bandawe, who has long aimed for an international platform to showcase his writing and presentation skills.

He credited his success to the rigorous competence-based system employed by the School of Law, Economics, and Government (SLEG). He acknowledged the guidance of great legal minds like Professor Edge Kanyongolo and Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise, who helped him build a strong foundation in legal writing and critical reasoning during their lectures.

Professor Happy Kayuni, the Executive Dean of the School of Law, Economics, and Government, emphasized that participating in essay competitions can be a rewarding experience, showcasing the university’s talents and contributing to the international academic community. He further said that this achievement reflects positively on the educational standards and support provided by the school. He has advised aspiring students to develop robust research and writing skills, focusing

on conducting thorough research and expressing their thoughts clearly in writing. He encouraged students to seek guidance from their departments and not hesitate to approach lecturers for advice and feedback.

Ms. Ronica Kuthakwanasi, echoing Professor Kayuni, attributed her success to her academic journey at the School of Law, Economics, and Government, which equipped her with the necessary research and writing skills. She has advised her peers not to underestimate the value of extracurricular competitions, emphasizing that they broaden one’s knowledge base. Reflecting on her motivation to participate, she shared, “What inspired me most to participate in the competition is my determination to understand more than what I learn in class. I realized that through participating in the competition, I’d be able to research more and write about issues that I am not currently learning in class.”

Both students expressed their determination to continue engaging in such activities and seizing opportunities for growth and development.

For the past 8 years, UNIMA students have been consistent in being featured among winning writers in the Lex:lead essay competition. Last year alone, three students from the University of Malawi penned winning essays in the competition.



Mr. Charles Dokera, Ms. Rashiedah Winesi, and Mr. Martin Chirwa

UNIMA Law students participate in Ian Fletcher Insolvency Moot Court Competition

The University of Malawi made it to the quarter-finals of the 2024 Ian Fletcher International Insolvency Moot Court Competition, thereby making it to the top 8 in the competition! UNIMA's team consisted of three 4th year law students, namely, Charles Dokera, Rashiedah Winesi, and Martin Chirwa.

The competition brings together law students, insolvency experts, and insolvency practitioners from all across the world in an effort to educate students on the highly technical area of law known as International Insolvency Law. The Competition is split into two formats - written and virtual oral. Only the top 16 teams from the written phase were invited to participate in the initial virtual oral round and among them, only the top 8 were chosen to take part in the quarter-finals.

"It's been an exciting adventure exploring cross-border insolvency law and competing against other universities. It's been an enlightening process," said Rashiedah Winesi, one of the team members.

According to Ms. Atupele Masanjala, the team's coach, UNIMA's feat of placing in the top 8 is only made more impressive by the fact that not only was this UNIMA's first time taking part in the competition, but international insolvency law is not taught at undergraduate level at UNIMA.

While the students have shown excellent research and advocacy skills by making it that far, the team remains exceedingly grateful for the assistance provided by legal experts both in and outside of UNIMA. Notably, the team received both technical and financial assistance from the Kalekeni Kaphale Lawyers law firm and its founding partner Senior Counsel Kalekeni Kaphale, and financial assistance from Mbendera and Nkhono Associates.

Although this marks UNIMA's inaugural participation in the Ian Fletcher Moot Competition, the university boasts a rich history of engagement in international moot competitions. Over the past years, UNIMA has actively competed

in esteemed events such as the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition in Geneva, the African Human Rights Moot Court Competition hosted annually in various African nations, and the John H Jackson International Trade Law Moot held in Kenya and Geneva. Notably, in 2017, UNIMA's team secured commendable positions, ranking fourth for their written submissions and eighth for their oral arguments at the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Competition. UNIMA team's exceptional performance in the Ian Fletcher Insolvency Moot Court Competition is therefore a testament to the university's enduring legacy in the realm of international moot court competitions.



UNIMA's budding insolvency law experts

ANNOUNCEMENTS



There have been a number of noteworthy developments in the past two months.

At UNIMA, we continue to recognize our people who, through secondment to the government, continue to rise and hold aloft the light of the university, acting as our ambassadors out there.

One of the university's staff in the Department of Economics, Dr Jacob Mazalale was in February, 2024, appointed Principal Secretary (Economic Affairs) in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. We congratulate him on this honour and wish him all the best.

In a similar vein, Dr Mangani Katundu, who was already seconded to the National Council for Higher Education as Director of Research Planning and Development, was recently appointed Secretary for Education in the Ministry of Education. We congratulate him of significant appointment.

Unfortunately, we have also lost loved ones during this period.

Within the UNIMA community, we can still feel the shock upon the passing of a treasured colleague, Mrs Yapikachi Kambala, a lecturer in the Department of Politics and Government, who passed away on 15th January 2024. May she rest in peace.

During the past two months, various members of staff at the university have also lost loved ones. We mourn for them and pray for the Good Lord to bring them comfort.

May the Good Lord comfort Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise, Deputy Vice Chancellor, whose mother passed away on 26th February, 2024.

To Mr. Stewart Chitseko, Library Assistant at Chinyamata Chipeta Library, whose father passed away in February, we offer our deepest condolences.

We also offer condolences to the family of Associate Prof. Elizabeth Kamchedzera, whose father passed away in February.

Only the Good Lord in Heaven may bring solace to the family of Mrs Innocencia Mtambo, secretary to the Executive Dean - School of Arts, Communication and Design, who lost her father during the same period.

May the Lord bring comfort to the family of Mr Yamikani Masina, a lecturer in the Academic and Careers Skills Department, upon the loss of his father.

We join Mr Yohane Mkorongo from the Finance Department in mourning the passing of his mother. May she rest in peace.



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