

# UNIMA Bulletin



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## Publicizing our presence

There is common saying within Malawi: “*dzuwa saladzerana.*”

It is meant to reflect on the fact that the resplendence of the sun is such an obvious thing, one that we witness as a daily occurrence, such that there is no need to draw attention to it. It is a saying that has been brought up in various fora to point out that if a particular product or service is brilliant to all, there is no need to advertise it.

Needless to say, the same has been said, in some corners, about the University of Malawi. With its 60-year old record of academic excellence, the assumption is that the institution has already done enough to prove its mettle. It has produced individuals who have gone on to become leaders on the international scene. Its enduring legacy is visible in every sector of Malawi’s society, and beyond. It has even birthed other institutions that have gone on to stand on their own as universities.

It is understandable why some would say, like the sun, we need not flaunt ourselves.

However, we defy this idea of saying we need not proclaim our majesty to the skies and beyond. We defy this insistence on a crippling humility that leads to an even more stagnating silence, in the assumption

that others will say for us what we cannot say ourselves. We defy the illogic of the obvious nature of the blazing sun which, in platonic allegory, others may forget, and mistake for a blazing fire.

Instead, we shall always remind the world of the excellence of UNIMA.

That is why we often tour the country, visiting secondary schools and prospective students in order to spread the gospel of UNIMA. In this issue of *UNIMA Bulletin*, we have carried a story in which the Executive Deans of UNIMA travelled all the way to Kamuzu Academy in Kasungu, in order to share the stories of UNIMA.

In line with the claim to excellence, and indeed highlighting the idea of charity beginning at home, we continue to celebrate our students. These include those who find at UNIMA a platform to nurture artistic talents that become recognized internationally. They also include the many brilliant young writers who pen essays that win national and international competitions. We also continue to applaud our students who score exceptionally in their studies. It is one thing for a student to score high marks in their work. It is another thing altogether for that student to be recognized by their classmates, lecturers and the Vice Chancellor himself.

In the case of those who score exceptionally high grades, there is also a bank cheque to sweeten the occasion. It is a way in which we appreciate excellence as it is manifested by our students.

This bulletin is one of the ways in which we continue to draw attention to the excellence of UNIMA, which indeed stands metaphorically as an ever-blazing sun. One needs to simply read an issue of the *UNIMA Bulletin* in order to appreciate exactly what it is that goes on at the university that makes it comparable to a brilliant sun. The answer lies in the high-calibre research output, the distinction level students, the inspired and inspiring artistic talents within, and many other factors that make us the envy of many.

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*Graduation: UNIMA's most important rite of passage*

## UNIMA graduation: Celebrating new beginnings

As they complete their sojourn at university, students are expected to be awarded various certificates upon completion. These awards are accompanied by a celebration during which men and women are joined by friends and family who come to witness the milestone in their education journey. As part of this annual tradition, the University of Malawi held its first congregation ceremony for 2024 on the 13th and 14th of March in the Great Hall.

The certificates were awarded to 2313 men and women who were enrolled in UNIMA as a federal university. Accordingly, among the graduands were those from three public universities: The University of Malawi (UNIMA), the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS), and the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHES).

The graduation ceremony was presided over by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi, Professor Samson Sajidu. Several notable university leaders and senior government officials were also in attendance. During the ceremony,

Prof. Samson Sajidu congratulated all the graduands for their hard work during their time at the universities and further stated that their achievements are a testament to their strength and determination. He further urged the graduates to embrace uncertainties and dream big.

“You are the future leaders, innovators, and changemakers of tomorrow, and the world needs your unique talents and perspectives now more than ever,” he said. “Whether you choose to pursue further education, enter the workforce, or embark on a different path altogether, always strive to make a positive impact on the world around you.”

Director of Higher Education, Dr. Levis Eneya, expressed delight during the ceremony, noting that the Ministry of Education consistently appreciates the significant number of graduates produced by universities. He emphasized that this is essential for capacity building and human capital development, which are key to implementing government projects.

Graduands in the Great Hall were

brimming with excitement as they received their certificates. One of the graduates from the University of Malawi, Miss Wongani Msumba, who was enrolled in the Bachelor of Education in Computer Science programme expressed her gratitude to the University for the skills she had acquired during her studies.

“Apart from academic skills like digital literacy and coding, I gained a multitude of other skills throughout my journey. Living in such a diverse environment allowed me to perceive situations from various perspectives,” Msumba said. “Some of the skills I acquired include critical thinking, time management, creativity and innovation, cultural competence, and social and emotional skills. I also had the opportunity to enhance existing skills like public speaking and writing.”

She further encouraged students currently enrolled in various programmes to value social capital, emphasizing its importance in the industry. She advised them to join various campus societies and actively participate in competitions.



*Some of the highest-scoring students displaying their certificates*

## UNIMA awards exceptional students

Each year, the University of Malawi recognizes and celebrates its students who perform exceptionally. On 4th April 2024, the Great Hall was filled with students from the five schools within UNIMA whose performance during the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year was deemed outstanding. Among the 216 students who made it onto the Dean's List, 17 students were awarded the Vice Chancellor's Award for achieving an exceptional Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.9 and above, out of a maximum of 4.0, each receiving a Mk1,000,000 cheque.

The ceremony was colorful and unique, commencing with a staff procession led by the University Registrar, Mr. Martin Matululu. Following him were the five Executive Deans, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise, and the Vice Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu. Among the other attendees were the Deputy Registrar, Mr. Alfred Banda, the Assistant Registrar (Students Affairs), Mrs. Eluby Kafumbata, the President of the Students' Representative Council, Mr. Thanks Elia Mwalwanda, various staff members and students.

During the ceremony, the Vice Chancellor congratulated all the students who made it onto the Dean's list for their hard work and dedication in their studies. He pointed out that the recipients of the Vice Chancellor's

Scholarship and those on the Dean's List have not only excelled academically but have also significantly contributed to the vibrant profile of UNIMA's academic environment. He also observed that their dedication to excellence serves as a beacon of inspiration for their peers and future generations of scholars in the University. He further emphasized that the success rate of the students is crucial for the university to be highly ranked, and having students achieve a GPA of 3.9 and above out of 4.0 is a remarkable accomplishment under his leadership. Additionally, he acknowledged everyone who nurtured their talents and guided their way, recognizing their significant roles.

"To those who have not made it onto the Dean's list or received the Vice Chancellor's Awards, do not be discouraged. Keep pushing forward, strive for excellence, and, above all, believe in yourself and your capabilities," he said. He continued by encouraging the students to regard failure as a mere setback, as failure is inevitable. "You should always view such setbacks as stepping stones to success rather than roadblocks. Networking can open doors to opportunities, providing valuable insights and support. If you are not able to network with your friends, it will be hard to secure a job in the industry," he stated.

The atmosphere in the Great Hall was

an electric one as the names of the 17 students who earned the prestigious Vice Chancellor's Award were announced. Out of these students, 16 were men and 1 was a woman named Miss Nomsa Zgambo. Zgambo, a fourth-year student enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts in Economics programme, expressed her excitement upon receiving the award. She recalled her experience during her second year when her grades were notably poor, leading her to sit for a supplementary exam. Undeterred by the setback, she persevered and succeeded. Zgambo continued by offering words of encouragement to students who did not make it onto the Deans List, urging them to persist and add an extra effort in their studies, emphasizing that grades should not define their capabilities.

Zgambo further expressed that she felt immensely proud and empowered by breaking stereotypes, serving as an inspiration for other girls and demonstrating that it is indeed possible to excel.

"I believe it was my hard work and constant determination that led to this achievement. I consistently maintained the belief that such greatness was within reach, and above all, maintained my unwavering faith in God. There were days when hard work alone wasn't sufficient, and I needed divine intervention," she said.



# UNIMA markets its programmes at Kamuzu Academy University Career Day



*Prospective UNIMA students from Kamuzu Academy*

As far as universities in the country go, the University of Malawi remains the desired destination for an overwhelming number of young people in the country and beyond. It is no surprise, therefore, that UNIMA recently participated in the 3rd annual Kamuzu Academy University Career Day, having been invited by the school's Deputy Headmaster, Mr. Andrew Hubbard. This event, which took place on 16th March, 2024, aimed at providing Kamuzu Academy students, from Form 3 to 6, with information about various higher education institutions. The event helped Kamuzu Academy students to explore different career paths that would be open to them after completing their studies. The opportunity was also extended to three other nearby secondary schools—Loyola Jesuit Secondary School, Mtunthama Secondary School, and All Saints Private School.

The event, which was held in the school's auditorium, was attended by representatives from public and private universities, as well as education consultancies.

The University of Malawi was well-represented by a team of Executive Deans from all five schools within the university, as well as the Head of Research, Dr.

Maurice Monjerezi, and the Head of the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Dr. Timothy Biswick, both of whom are alumni of Kamuzu Academy. The Executive Deans engaged with students throughout the event, answering questions, providing guidance, and explaining the programmes offered at their respective schools.

Speaking during the event, Professor Cosmo Ngongondo, the Executive Dean of the School of Natural and Applied Sciences, emphasized the importance of the gathering, noting that many students lack critical information about offerings at public universities. He further emphasized the importance of UNIMA having a strong presence at the career day.

“As a leading public university, UNIMA strives to offer the best programmes that should be the first choice for all top students aspiring for university level education,” he said. “Each student here has received materials that contain information on all the current undergraduate programmes offered at UNIMA. With this knowledge being handy, we expect an increase in the number of applicants into UNIMA courses.”

The event was a success and gave both the participating universities and the students the opportunity to interact. In the end, the students left the auditorium inspired and motivated.



*Dr Maurice Monjerezi explains UNIMA's programmes*





*UNIMA students: Protecting the Mulunguzi Dam Catchment Area*

## The work of our hands: UNIMA students in tree planting exercise

As deforestation increases at an alarming rate in the country, it has brought about several consequences on the country's wildlife and rainfall patterns, among other areas. Recently, students from various societies at the University of Malawi have been engaging in awareness campaigns advocating for green spaces. Additionally, they have taken on the responsibility of planting as many trees as possible in various districts across Malawi as a means of restoring the ecosystem.

On 9th March, 2024, over 80 students belonging to the Biological Science Society and the Wildlife and Environmental Society participated in a tree planting exercise at Mulunguzi Dam Catchment Area. The event was attended by the University Registrar, Mr. Martin Matululu, and it also attracted other members of staff from various departments who joined the students.

During the exercise, around 2000 trees were planted. The exercise was spurred by the observation of significant tree cutting in the catchment area that supplies water to Zomba city. The Guest of Honor,

Mr. Matululu, remarked that deforestation could potentially impact the catchment area, thereby affecting the supply of clean water.

“By planting trees, our aim is to preserve the catchment area to ensure adequate tree cover. One critical reason why trees are essential is that they prevent soil erosion. In the event of soil erosion, the catchment area is affected, leading to water contamination,” Matululu stated. “Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the air and atmosphere, meaning that planting more trees will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the air.”

The President of the Wildlife and Environment Society, Mr. Japheth Abel, extended gratitude to the university management for their support and also appreciated all students who participated in the tree planting exercise. Abel emphasized that as students, they have a crucial role to play in contributing to the wellness of the nation, firmly believing that nothing can be beneficial if the environment and trees are not well conserved. He continued by

stating that planting trees is one significant way for students to contribute to the wellness of the country.

After a successful tree planting exercise, Mr. Leonard Kayuni, a third-year actuarial science student, expressed his passionate commitment to environmental conservation and protection. He further advocated for increased youth involvement in tree planting and safeguarding the environment against deforestation. He also spoke on the need for students to engage in some activities outside the classroom.

“Besides academic lessons, every student must participate in extracurricular activities,” Kayuni said. “This not only provides relaxation but also fosters opportunities for interaction with staff members.”

To ensure the survival of the trees, the university will maintain regular communication with the Plantation Manager. Additionally, they will ensure that the tree planting exercise becomes an annual event.





*Participants pose for a picture after the training sessions*

## MACRA facilitates training workshop for Chanco Radio & TV

To uphold professionalism, develop, and motivate its staff, CHANCO Radio and TV, a community broadcaster run by the University of Malawi, recently hosted a two-day training workshop organized by a team from the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA). The team, consisting of experts from various fields, aimed to share knowledge with the staff and also gain insights from them.

According to one of the facilitators, Mrs. Matilda Bande, the Director of Broadcasting at MACRA, the team came upon receiving an invitation from CHANCO Radio and TV. In an interview, she pointed out it is one of MACRA's obligations to provide training.

"In our mandate, we do this kind of training, but normally we do training in general for all broadcasters," she said. "This workshop was unique because they wanted us to train all of their staff members. When we conduct our general training it's not feasible for all CHANCO radio and TV staff members to attend as we only invite a few members from each broadcaster."

She also highlighted the significance of community broadcasters, noting that they have a deep understanding of their community's needs and challenges. She

urged CHANCO Radio and TV to, therefore, continue paying attention to their audience and being involved in community activities to remain relevant.

Mr. Gracious Mulinga, the Station Officer at CHANCO Radio and TV, stated that the workshop was part of the station's broader goal of promoting staff development and motivation. This was to ensure that the staff stayed updated with current industry practices, enhancing their service to the audience.

"This training brought us various insights into the dynamic world of broadcasting. It especially highlighted best practices, given that the facilitators themselves are seasoned broadcasters who went on to take up various positions at the regulatory

body," he remarked.

The training covered all aspects of the industry, including news writing, reporting, and editing. The facilitators discussed essential topics such as ethical broadcasting practices, the importance of thorough preparation, and the adoption of new digital technologies like social media and websites as supplementary platforms to traditional channels. Participants were also cautioned about the dangers of misinformation and disinformation, which could tarnish the reputation of radio and TV.

The workshop included a Q&A session, allowing participants to seek clarification on various issues from the facilitators.



*One the facilitators making his presentation*





*One of the participants receives a certificate from the University Librarian, Mr Brian Sitima-Ndau*

## Library department conducts record management workshop

Various departments within the University of Malawi offer training programs to equip people from different sectors with essential skills and knowledge. Employees from different government and private institutions, such as EGENCO, Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM), Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS), Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS), University of Malawi (UNIMA), and others, recently participated in a training program organized by the Library department titled “Developing a Functional Records Classification System.” The workshop was held from 24th to 26th April 2024, at the ICT Business Centre.

The workshop was officially opened with remarks from the University Librarian, Mr. Sitima Ndau. He began by commending the course coordinator, Assistant Librarian Ms. Jessy Mphunda, for her effective organization of the workshop. Mr. Ndau highlighted the existing gap in records management across many organizations and encouraged the participants to approach the workshop with seriousness

and dedication, emphasizing that today’s records management challenges are both real and pressing. He also urged participants to fully engage in all sessions and practical exercises.

“The knowledge and skills acquired here will not only transform our approach to records management, but also have a profound impact on the efficiency, effectiveness, and compliance of our operations. Let us not underestimate the significance of this workshop. The strategies, best practices, and insights we gain here will equip us to overcome the challenges of disorganized records and unlock the full potential of our organization’s information management,” he said.

Ms. Mphunda covered various topics, including the significance of a records management classification system, how to develop a file index, and the functional requirements for an electronic records management system, among others. During the sessions, participants were divided into groups to discuss specific questions they were given. After their

discussions, they presented their findings from their groups. The sessions were highly interactive, as the course coordinator used a variety of teaching methods.

After the workshop’s completion, participants received certificates, and the ceremony was led by Mr. Ndau. As the course coordinator, Ms. Mphunda expressed her appreciation to all the attendees, expressing her belief in their ability to make a significant impact wherever they go. “Let’s make sure we learn and improve every day,” she said. “We have also established a strong network that will support us moving forward.”

The class representative, a participant from MUBAS, Mr Daniel Mwakopola, expressed gratitude and appreciation to the UNIMA Library Department for organizing an exceptional workshop, describing it as one of a kind. He noted that as they return to their respective offices, they will make a significant impact. He thanked UNIMA for the knowledge they gained during the workshop, which will enhance their work in their respective organizations.





*Professor Happy Kayuni and Mr. Zhang Zhijie sign the MoU*

## School of Law, Economics and Government signs MoU with Africa International Arbitration Centre

On Friday, 20th April 2024, the School of Law, Economics and Government (LEG) entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Africa International Arbitration Centre. The signing of the MOU was attended by the President of the Africa International Arbitration Centre (Malawi), Mr. Zhang Zhijie, and by the Dean of LEG, Professor Happy Kayuni, the Head of the Public Law and Clinical Legal Studies Department, Dr Ngime Mweso and Ms. Atupele Masanjala, who was representing the Head of the Private Law Department, Dr. Bernadette Malunga.

The purpose of the MOU is to establish a scholarship to benefit law students under LEG who study international arbitration. The scholarship shall be both merit and need based, targeting high achieving students who are facing financial difficulties. For the first year of the scholarship, the Africa International Arbitration Centre has provided an initial grant of MK10million.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Ms. Masanjala highlighted the significance of the support. “In recent years international arbitration has become increasingly important in Malawi especially with the passing of the new International

Arbitration Act and the government’s plan to establish an arbitration institution in Malawi,” she said. “So a partnership targeting arbitration and seeking to foster more research in the topic could not have come at a better time!”

While the scholarship is the first step of the partnership between the parties, there are

also plans to put in place further activities such as student exchange programmes, short courses and internships for students. LEG is grateful to the Africa International Arbitration Centre for its generosity and is excited to work with them on other endeavors in what will prove to be a fruitful partnership for both parties.



*The two parties pose with a dummy transaction receipt*





*Dr Mwakilama assisting one of the students*

## Media students participate in data journalism training

At the University of Malawi, students have the opportunity to participate in various training sessions that equip them with knowledge useful in their academic work, while also providing practical information before they complete their studies. Recently, from 13th to 21st March, 2024, 49 students studying media, communication and journalism at UNIMA participated in a data journalism training course organized by an expert from within the institution. The objective of the training was to provide students with essential data analytics techniques crucial for crafting impactful data-driven stories.

The students were trained by Dr. Elias Mwakilama, an Associate Professor from the Department of Mathematics. He engaged the students on the use of Excel and RStudio software to organize, manipulate, and analyze raw data, enabling them to generate infographics or charts relevant for storytelling or media communication. Dr. Mwakilama further explained that his decision to offer this training was influenced by the experiences gained during the COVID-19 era, as many people across the world experienced panic and trauma due to misinformation and data falsification.

“Strengthening the existing media infrastructure with proper data reporting skills could help manage future

pandemics properly,” Dr. Mwakilama said. He emphasized that the lack of health data disclosure leads to ‘social media panic’ characterized by the widespread dissemination of false information, which undermines the efforts of health departments. However, Mwakilama noted that social media can be a valuable platform for addressing pandemics if used effectively. “One way to achieve this is by equipping journalists with data analytics skills. With these skills, journalists can interpret data and present them effectively to the general public, thereby enhancing access and creating opportunities for engagement and accountability.”

Dr. Mwakilama continued by stating that the training targeted students from UNIMA and the University of Eswatini, and it was planned to be conducted virtually. However, due to misaligned academic calendars between the two universities, it was decided to run blended sessions. Consequently, he stated that students are expected to engage with their counterparts from the University of Eswatini through the online learning platform.

The students expressed delight upon receiving their certificates after completing the training. Ms. Clara Shumba, currently in her fourth year in the Bachelor of Arts in Media for Development programme, conveyed her gratitude for the highly

educational training and the valuable skills she acquired.

“Through the data journalism training, I have acquired numerous skills, including data analysis, primarily focusing on analyzing data sets to extract meaningful insights and trends, as well as storytelling skills using RStudio and data visualization techniques, particularly on how to present data using visuals such as graphs,” she said. “I believe that these skills will greatly benefit me when I enter the industry, enabling me to become an exceptional communicator capable of analyzing data, creating visually engaging presentations, and crafting reports to effectively communicate complex information. The knowledge I have gained in using Excel will assist me in my research studies to analyze my findings and present them visually.”

Dr. Mwakilama expressed satisfaction with the students’ performance and turnout during the training. He was impressed by how the students easily grasped the content, despite not pursuing science programmes. Furthermore, he extended his gratitude to the students who participated in the training and to the Head of the Department of Media and Communication, Dr. Anthony Gunde, for organizing the workshop.





*Students interact with ILLOVO staff*

## Illovo women inspire female students

The University of Malawi hosted ILLOVO Women in Leadership (I WIL) on 06th April 2024, at the Mwambo Lecture Theatre, where they interacted with over 100 female students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and other programmes. The women hold leadership positions across various departments at ILLOVO Sugar Malawi, one of the country's best-known sugar producing companies. The university career talk, themed "Inspiring and Empowering Women: The Next Generation of Leaders," was a success as students found inspiration in the stories shared by ILLOVO women, detailing their beginnings and the achievements they have accomplished.

As one of the women in leadership at ILLOVO, holding the role of Business Partner, Mrs. Jeannie Manda began by explaining the objectives of the 'I WIL' initiative, which include prioritizing recruitment, development, advancement, and achieving a 30% representation of women in leadership by 2026. She also stated that "I WIL" aims to sponsor female leaders in business and to hold secondary and university career talks. Manda shared her journey from her undergraduate studies at UNIMA to her current position, highlighting some of the challenges she has faced and how she overcame them, as well as sharing her achievements.

She continued by encouraging the students to work extra hard in their studies, emphasizing that outstanding performance is the only thing that speaks for them. Furthermore, she encouraged the girls to be resilient, stay focused in their studies, and not allow distractions to hinder them. Manda advised them to seek assistance and guidance from the right people and systems that already exist at UNIMA.

"Adjust to the changing world, utilize the resources that surround you, learn from those around you, whether here on campus or in the industry, and don't get discouraged by what people say about you," she emphasized.

During the function, Dr. Victoria Ndolo, Head of the Department of Human Ecology and Agricultural Sciences, expressed gratitude to the management of ILLOVO for visiting UNIMA and delivering a career talk to the female students, aiming to inspire them during their learning process. She further expressed how impressed she was with the objectives of 'I WIL' which focus on inspiring young girls and women in STEM to help them realize their full potential. Dr. Ndolo also extended her gratitude to the guest speakers for sharing their stories with the girls, emphasizing the message that they should not limit themselves but always believe they can reach high levels.

"It is within the School of Natural and Applied Sciences that we find most of the STEM-focused young girls and women that 'I WIL' targets," she said. "We are pleased to share that as a School of Science and Applied Sciences, our vision is to become a center of excellence for scientific technology, training, and research for sustainable development." She informed the gathering that the University has increased the enrollment of women across all programmes, particularly noting the high enrollment of girls in the School of Natural and Applied Sciences compared to previous years.

The Assistant Registrar (Welfare and Sports), Mrs. Eluby Kafumbata, also expressed gratitude to the ILLOVO women for dedicating their time to inspire UNIMA students. She further encouraged the students to always speak up and learn to report issues to the right people when they encounter various challenges.

The university career talk concluded with a session of questions and answers, during which students had the opportunity to interact with the women from the sugar production company. As a gesture of appreciation, ILLOVO women distributed branded items to students and members of staff present during the event.



# Exploring disaster risk in Malawi: Insights from the research roundtable



*Participants engage in discussions on disaster management*

Malawi, like many other countries, faces numerous challenges when it comes to disaster management. The loss of infrastructure, property, and human lives from 2023's Cyclone Freddy is still fresh in the memories of many Malawians. To delve into this crucial issue of disaster management, the University of Malawi, through the Department of Geography, Earth Sciences, and Environment, hosted a research roundtable titled "Disaster Risk in Malawi: Research Needs, Ideas, and Opportunities", on 19th April, 2024 at the Economics Building boardroom. This informal yet insightful discussion enabled the UNIMA academic community to explore the various facets of disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the country.

The roundtable, which was led by Professor Cosmo Ngongondo, Executive Dean of the School of Natural and Applied Sciences at the University of Malawi, brought together a range of experts to discuss types of natural hazards, different aspects of the disaster cycle from prevention to recovery, and relevant services including health, agriculture, housing, and settlement planning.

Experts from the School of Law, Economics, and Governance; Centre for Social Research; School of Humanities and

Social Sciences; and School of Natural and Applied Sciences led by the Department of Geography, Earth Sciences and Environment, along with industry partners and practitioners, joined forces to examine Malawi's recent hazard experiences and their impacts.

The event was supported by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) as part of a larger research project led by UNIMA's Department of Geography, Earth Sciences, and Environment in collaboration with the University of East Anglia. The project, titled "Homemaking in Communities Recovering from Disasters," co-led by Professor Roger Few and Dr. Evance Mwachunga, focuses on understanding the processes of homemaking, including self-recovery and home rebuilding post-displacement.

Dr. Evance Mwachunga, an Associate Professor of Geography at UNIMA and lead investigator of the research project, expressed optimism about the insights gained from the roundtable. He also emphasized the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing across sectors, stating that addressing disaster risk requires a multidisciplinary approach as no single discipline can fully comprehend and tackle the complex nature

of disasters.

The collaborative efforts and shared expertise are expected to contribute significantly to enhancing disaster resilience and recovery strategies in Malawi.

Industry partners such as the Malawi Geological Survey Department, Catholic Relief Services, Zomba City Council, CADECOM, Churches Action in Relief Services, and international participants from the UK's British Geological Survey and the University of East Anglia, as well as France's International Centre for Earth Construction, enriched the conversation with their practical insights and experiences.

The roundtable also identified critical research gaps in disaster risk reduction and recovery, paving the way for future collaborative projects. Ethical considerations in disaster contexts were thoroughly discussed, highlighting the need for responsible and sensitive research practices. The research roundtable served as a platform for robust discussions, idea generation, and potential collaborations, underscoring the collective commitment to addressing disaster risk challenges and fostering sustainable development in Malawi.





*The discussion on Malawi-USA relations underway*

## UNIMA PAS Society Engages US Embassy: A Dialogue on International Relations

The Political and Administration Students (PAS) Society, which comprises of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Political Science and Public Administration programme within the School of Law, Economics, and Government at the University of Malawi, recently had the pleasure of hosting Mrs. Amy W. Diaz, the US Embassy Charge d'Affaires. Mrs. Diaz engaged with the students on matters concerning the relationship between Malawi and the United States, as well as broader international relations.

The discussions took place at the T&D Conference Center, with notable attendees including Professor Happy Kayuni, the Executive Dean of the School of Law, Economics, and Government; Dr. Michael Chasukwa, Head of the Political Science Department; and Ms. Talandira Maulidi, the Vice President of the PAS Society.

During her visit, Mrs. Diaz also toured the UNIMA campus, appreciating the facilities and the conducive learning environment it offers.

Following the interactions, Professor Kayuni expressed gratitude for the visit, highlighting its significance in supplementing the students' classroom knowledge with insights from someone with extensive experience in international

relations. He emphasized the benefits of the Malawi-US relationship, particularly noting the opportunities afforded to Malawi as a beneficiary under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). This act, approved by the US Congress in May 2000, aims to bolster the economies of Sub-Saharan Africa and enhance economic ties between the US and the region.

Echoing Professor Kayuni's sentiments, Ms. Maulidi remarked, "We learn a lot about Malawi's relationships with other countries, but this interaction provided

us with perspectives from individuals with hands-on experience in the field, enriching our knowledge."

The visit proved fruitful, with a large number of students actively engaging with Mrs. Diaz, asking important questions and applying their knowledge to the discussions. It was evident that the students were well-versed in current affairs, as they were able to adeptly discuss major international issues related to elections and diplomatic relations.



*Students taking notes during the discussions*





*Mr. Mussa Ching'amba (left) gets recognition for his study*

## National Water Conference applauds UNIMA student research

On 23rd and 24th March 2024, Mr. Mussa Ching'amba, a University of Malawi student in the School of Natural and Applied Sciences enrolled in the Master of Science in Modelling and Governance programme, attended the 2024 National Water Conference and Exhibition at the Bingu International Conference Centre in Lilongwe. The conference attracted various water and sanitation practitioners, and 15 of them presented their research papers. Among these 15 papers, Ching'amba's paper was voted as the most impressive.

The conference, held under the theme "Leveraging Water for Peace," was organized by the Water Services Association of Malawi (WASAMA) and was graced by the Minister of Water and Sanitation, Honorable Abida Mia. The conference was aligned with the annual celebration of World Water Day, which falls on 22nd March. Several activities took place during the conference, including a panel discussion where various matters related to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) were highlighted. Additionally, the conference provided researchers with an opportunity to share their findings from various studies.

"I am a WASH practitioner working with the Southern Region Water Board," Ching'amba remarked. "I attended the conference to present a paper on one of

the main topics discussed: Catchment management." His research, entitled "Assessment of Recent Drivers of Change in The Flow Regime of the Mulunguzi River Basin, Malawi," aimed to assess the recent causes of change in the river flow regime of the Mulunguzi River. Specifically, the study analyzed alterations in land use and land cover (LULC) in the Mulunguzi River Basin between 1990 and 2020, examined recent hydro-climatic trends in the catchment, and evaluated the isolated and combined effects of modifications in LULC and climate change on river flow.

"The knowledge I gained at UNIMA provided me with an understanding of

how water resources could be impacted by various factors. With the dwindling of many critical water resources in Malawi, I utilized the modeling knowledge to conduct research on the main environmental factors affecting the Mulunguzi River Basin, specifically land use and land cover and climate change," he remarked.

With excitement, Ching'amba mentioned that his paper emerged as the best, as it comprehensively covered issues affecting water resources. Additionally, the paper discussed how climate change and catchment degradation affect water resources.



*Winning research paper presenter: Mr. Mussa Ching'amba*





*Students display paintings created during the event*

## Sip-and-Paint event reveals students' artistic talent

The UNIMA campus quadrangle was a mesmerizing display of colour on 19th April, 2024, thanks to an exhibition of various works produced by fine art students. This was part of a Sip 'n' Paint event organized by the Fine Art Society, composed of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Fine and Performing Arts programme. The display featured paintings rendered in different art styles, from realistic and familiar still life images to mind-boggling abstract artworks. The variety of displays illustrated the students' familiarity with various media, including oil on canvas, charcoal drawings and watercolours, used to render images varying from portraits to vegetation.

However, the event was not just about exhibiting artworks produced by current and past fine art students. It also welcomed other staff and students to participate. For a small fee, participants were equipped with the necessary tools – paintbrush, paints, canvas and professional guidance – to temporarily enter the world of the fine artists and experience the godlike power of creating life on canvas, in different art styles. Upon completion, they were

allowed to take their artworks home.

Mwai Kaufulu, the Society's president, described the event as their first, serving as both a fundraiser and an invitation for students from other programs to join their group. He emphasized that artistic talent is not limited to Fine Art students, as shown by the impressive works created by participants from various academic backgrounds.

Kaufulu stated, "We're welcoming people from all academic fields to take part in our events. Many assume that artistic talent is exclusive to Fine Art students, but today's event has proven otherwise. Whether you're studying science or economics, you can join the Fine Art Society. Furthermore, this event was an opportunity for us to promote our society. Within the university, there's limited awareness about our program and society, so we want to showcase what we do. Our plans include hosting similar events outside the university to demonstrate our skills to a wider audience."

Ms. Roseby Makawa, a lecturer in the Department of Fine Art specializing in art

history and painting, pointed out that the event aimed to simulate the professional art industry, providing students with a platform to market themselves through exhibitions.

"Our goal was to immerse students in a real-world art experience," she said. "This event mirrors how they will promote themselves after graduation. We wanted to give our students a platform to try and market themselves. At the same time, we also wanted to give a chance to other students that we know are talented in art but can not come to our department to learn art because of their busy schedules."

Jacqueline Nsamala, a second-year social work student and one of the participants, shared her passion for art as a form of non-verbal expression. She, however, noted that in Malawi, art is not often taken seriously, resulting in artists earning less compared to other countries where painting holds higher value. The Fine Art Society believes events like Sip 'n' Paint can change the situation, fostering greater appreciation for talent.





*Tionge Kumwenda (middle) with fellow participants at the colloquium*

## Kumwenda represents UNIMA at the Codesria Colloquium

Students at the University of Malawi often participate in various local and international events, sharing knowledge gained during their studies and learning from others. Recently, Miss Tionge Kumwenda, a third-year student enrolled in the Bachelor of Media for Development programme, traveled to Mozambique to join scholars and students from universities across Africa. They gathered to discuss and explore the themes of academic freedom and democracy under the conference theme: “Academic Freedom and Sustainable Democracy in Africa: Re-envisioning the Role of Universities.”

Miss Kumwenda stated that the journey to the CODESRIA Colloquium on Academic Freedom and Democracy was an enlightening experience that broadened her horizons and deepened her understanding of the critical issues our societies face. The event, held from 15th to 17th April 2024, brought together representatives from six African universities, including

those from Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, and Malawi. She also mentioned that the event’s rich diversity enhanced the discussions and allowed for a more nuanced exploration of academic freedom and democracy in the African context.

“The colloquium provided a platform for knowledge sharing, dialogue, and collaboration,” she said. “From the event, I gained a wealth of knowledge and insights on the importance of academic freedom, democracy, and critical thinking in education. Engaging with fellow scholars from different backgrounds allowed me to learn about the diverse perspectives and experiences that shape our understanding of these crucial issues.”

The colloquium featured a variety of activities, such as presentations and debates on academic freedom and democracy, as well as question-and-answer sessions that encouraged dialogue and

exchange. Furthermore, participants had the opportunity to explore the historical sites of Maputo, enhancing the experience with a cultural aspect.

“Reflecting on the event, I am inspired by our shared commitment to promoting sustainable democracy and academic freedom in Africa. The insights gained from the colloquium will certainly guide my future efforts as a student and advocate for positive change within my university and beyond,” she stated.

Miss Kumwenda concluded by stating that the CODESRIA Colloquium was a transformative experience that reaffirmed the importance of dialogue, collaboration, and education in shaping a brighter future for Africa. She also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to have been part of the journey and looked forward to applying the lessons learned to effect positive change in her community and society at large.





*A volleyball game in session at the Sports Complex*

## Preparing for 2024 CUCSA games: UNIMA hosts talent selection matches

As part of the preparations for the Confederation of Universities and Colleges Sports Association (CUCSA) games scheduled for July 2024 in South Africa, the University of Malawi, on 6th April, 2024, hosted sports games aimed at selecting talent from the various sportsmen and women within tertiary institutions in the country. The initiative, organized by the Tertiary Education Students Sports Association of Malawi (TESSAM), aimed to select top players to represent Malawi across various sports categories such as football, netball, athletics, tennis, volleyball, and chess. This selection process focused on talented students from universities and colleges in the Southern Region of Malawi.

The participating institutions in this process included the University of Malawi, Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences, Malawi University of Science

and Technology, Catholic University, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, DMI from Mangochi Campus, Domasi College of Education, and Malawi College of Accountancy. Following the selection, chosen students will join those identified as the best players from universities and colleges in the Northern and Central regions of Malawi, whose selection occurred at Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Mr. Courtex Nzima, Sports Officer at UNIMA, highlighted that the final teams formed from these selection processes will compete against other teams within Malawi. This local competition aims to help the teams identify areas for improvement before they depart for South Africa. He also shared that the teams are being selected by professionals and renowned individuals in sports.

Mrs. Joana Kachirika, coach for Malawi Netball team – the Queens – who was tasked with selecting the netball team pointed out that she focused on specific qualities.

“My primary focus is on the height of the players and their performance. Reflecting on the previous CUCSA games hosted by Malawi, we encountered challenges due to the height of our players. This time, we have a good number of players with adequate height, although not as tall as those from other participating countries. However, with thorough preparations, our team can perform well, and we anticipate positive results.”

The CUCSA games provides yet another opportunity to UNIMA students who will be amongst those selected to showcase their skills and talent on an international platform.





*Prof. Kayuni presents a trophy to representatives of one of the winning teams*

## A day of trophies: Celebrating sporting excellence at SLEG

The University of Malawi has long embraced student achievements, whether academic or non-academic. In a recent development, the School of Law, Economics, and Government awarded its students a total of MK2,900,000.00 in prize money during the Executive Dean's Trophy awards ceremony, which took place in the Great Hall on April 14th, 2024.

In the preceding weeks, the School had organized a tournament involving the four societies within the school: The Student Law Society, Political and Administration Students Society, Law Enforcement Society, and Economics Society. The tournament featured sports categories such as basketball, football, volleyball, netball, sprint race, and board games.

These awards came shortly after the UNIMA Vice Chancellor had awarded 17 students with MK1,000,000.00 each for achieving a GPA of 3.90 and above. This demonstrates the school's commitment to supporting students by motivating them, aligning with the Vice Chancellor's vision.

The Executive Dean of the School, Professor Happy Kayuni, graced the event, accompanied by Dr. Michael Chasukwa, Head of the Politics and Government Department, and Dr. Tiyesere Chikapa, Head of the Management and Leadership Studies Department.

The event provided an opportunity for students to interact with the Executive

Dean, who enthusiastically joined them in dancing, creating a shared moment of celebration.

Mr. Isaiah Mbolebole, one of the students who organized the event, explained that the trophy was first introduced in 2023. This event marked its second occurrence, with the addition of more games compared to the previous year.

“The whole essence of the Executive Dean's Trophy is to bring together the societies under the School of Law, Economics, and Government, and to promote and enhance interaction and networking,” he said.

During the tournament, the teams from the Students Law Society emerged as winners

in football, basketball, and volleyball, receiving MK200,000 for each category, while the PAS Society emerged as the top performer in netball, also receiving MK200,000. The second, third, and fourth positions received MK150,000, MK100,000, and MK50,000 respectively.

In the category of board games, the Economics Society emerged victorious in chess, while the PAS Society excelled in checkers, and the Law Enforcement Society claimed victory in bawo. The tournament also featured a sprint race where Mr. Charles Sizalande and Ms. Thembi Kulemera both from Economics Society won in the men's and women's categories, respectively, each receiving MK80,000 as their prize.



*Trophies galore: Some of the winners pose with SLEG staff*



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



So much happens at the University of Malawi over a short period. In the period between March and April, 2024, we have much to celebrate, but also reasons to mourn.

Our celebrations arise from recognizing colleagues who have successfully upgraded their academic qualifications. This is a cause for celebration, more especially in an institution of higher education like ours, where our profile becomes strengthened with every Masters or Doctorate qualification that we add to our ranks.

In that vein, we congratulate Dr. Fiskani Kondowe Ndasauka, who successfully defended her thesis at the University of Manchester in March, 2024.

We also congratulate Dr. Benson John of the Department of Sociology and Population Studies, on the successful defence of his thesis at Stockholm University.

Congratulations are also due to Dr. Bernard Mmame from the Department of Physics and Electronics, who completed his PhD studies at Andhra University in India.

Congratulations, colleagues! May you continue contributing to the excellence of UNIMA.

As is the nature of the world, we laugh at one turn only to weep at the next. We thus show solidarity at UNIMA both at times of

celebration and times of mourning. This is why we salute those with whom we have served in the university, who have passed on to join the Good Lord. We also offer words of condolence and support to those who have lost loved ones during this period.

On 29th February, 2024, the University was death a heavy blow, when we lost Mr. Paul Gunde, a staff member in the Physics Department. We pray for his restful eternal sleep.

In the past two months, Mrs Ethel Kotokwa from Fine and Performing Arts lost her son. We can only pray for the Good Lord to bring comfort to her aching heart.

The father to Mrs Eunice M'biya, an academic colleague in the Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies, also passed away in March, 2024. May his soul rest in peace.

Dr Lisnet Mwadzaangati from the School of Education, also lost her mother on 1st April, 2024. May her soul rest in peace.

At the end of April, we received the sad news of the death of the father of Mrs. Fwengechi Kilowe from the Registrar's Office. May the angels of heaven bring some measure of comfort to Mrs. Kilowe's family.

We also offer condolences to Mr. Hussein Nkango, Office Assistant in the Department of Media and Communication Studies, on the passing of his mother. May her soul rest in peace.

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