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UBNEWS

In Pursuit of Academic Excellence

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EDITOR'S NOTE

At the University of Botswana (UB), we are not just fostering academic excellence, we are shaping the future through debate, research and international collaboration. In this issue, we are excited to bring you stories that showcase UB's recent achievements and its unwavering commitment to nurturing students while advancing impactful research.

One highlight we are especially proud of, is UB students, Kgotla Tshimologo and Wetsho Letang, who clinched the 1st English Second Language (ESL) Award at the Southern Africa Universities Debate Championship (SAUDC).

Their victory is not just a win for UB; it's a demonstration of how we are shaping critical thinkers ready to take on the world. Debate has become more than just a competitive sport. It is a vital tool for fostering democratic values and tackling the pressing issues of our time. UB Chancellor, Ms Tebelelo Mazile Seretse, echoed this sentiment by calling on universities to revive debate as a key driver for democracy and economic growth across Africa.

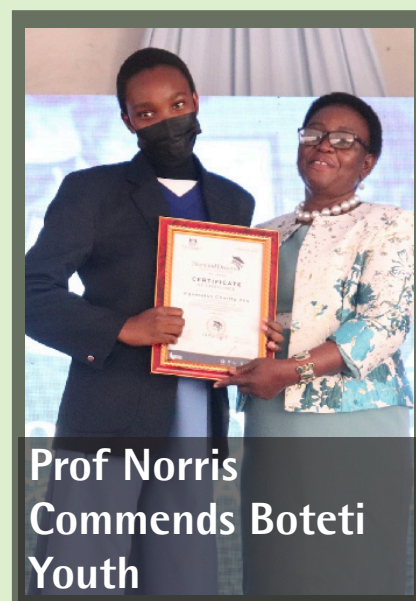
But it does not stop there. UB is making big strides in the research landscape through its involvement in the OSCAR 2.0 Open Science project. Funded by the European Commission, the initiative aims at making research more transparent and accessible across

Sub-Saharan Africa. We are not just talking about research that fills the pages of academic journals, this is research with real societal impact, perfectly aligned with UB's mission. Our Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, also pointed out that UB is establishing powerful collaborations with the Diamonds for Development Fund to tap into critical areas such as renewable energy, tourism and agriculture. These partnerships promise to address national and regional challenges by ensuring that UB remains a leader in research that promotes sustainable growth.

Therefore, as you flip through the pages of this edition, we invite you to explore UB's growing role in debate, research and innovation. We are confident you will be inspired by how UB continues to make its mark in Botswana, Africa and globally.

Thomas Nkhoma

Highlights...



**Prof Norris
Commends Boteti
Youth**

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UB Freshers Encouraged To Embrace A Transformative Mindset

UB students win 1st ESL Award at Southern Africa Universities Debate Championship

University of Botswana (UB) students, Kgotla Tshimologo and Wetsho Letang, clinched the 1st English Second Language (ESL) Award at the Southern Africa Universities Debate Championship (SAUDC) held at the UB Conference Centre on the 13th of July 2024. In addition, the UB Library received a generous donation of books worth US\$3000 from the Government of Zimbabwe.

Among their achievements, Kgotla Tshimologo was honoured with the 10th Best Speaker Debate Award, while Wetsho Letang secured the 4th Best Speaker Debate Award. Other UB students who excelled include Ruby Njonde, who received the 5th Best Public Speaking Award and was recognised as the Best Speaker in English Second Language. Neo Ruth Selilo earned the 2nd Best Speaker English Second Language Award while Lesego Mokone was honoured with the 10th Best Debate Adjudicator Award.



Award winning students of the University of Botswana

University of Botswana and RPTU Renew Memorandum of Understanding on Joint Research Projects



RPTU Co-President, Professor Gabriele Schaumann and Professor David Norris signing the MoU.

University of Botswana (UB) and Rheinland-Pfälzische Technische Universität Kaiserslautern-Landau (RPTU) from Germany have signed a revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen relations in areas of joint research projects, staff and students exchange as well as academic and cultural exchange.

The MoU was signed on the 27th of June 2024 at the UB Council Chamber and Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris signed on behalf of UB while Co-President, Professor Gabriele Schaumann, signed on behalf of RPTU.

In his welcome remarks, Professor Norris said collaboration between UB, the Government, private sector and civil society had potential to improve research and innovation. He said collaboration between UB and the industry could contribute positively to the growth of the economy and society.

He observed that UB had done well in research but lagged behind in value chain product development and commercialization. He added that UB was currently working towards transforming research work into product development. He indicated that the partnership between UB and RPTU would help in achieving the goals for both universities.

Acting Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Professor Fidelis Nkomazana, highlighted that the revised MoU would be expanded to include the faculties of Humanities, Social Sciences, Education and other areas of mutual agreement. He said the MoU

opened more opportunities for staff and students' exchanges. Professor Nkomazana said the previous MoU only allowed undergraduate students for exchange programmes while the revised MoU allowed graduate students as well as staff members for supervision.

He indicated that the exchange programme also aimed at enhancing mutual supervision resources, whereas the previous MoU primarily focused on strengthening academic and cultural ties. He mentioned that the revised MoU sought to expand beyond joint research projects, workshops, conferences and publications. Research areas that have been identified, said Professor Nkomazana, included environmental science, political science and

education. In response, RPTU Co-President Professor Gabriele Schaumann expressed high appreciation for the partnership between the two universities. She observed that both institutions had long enjoyed a fruitful and valuable collaboration that had grown and thrived despite numerous challenges.

Professor Schaumann said RPTU was the second largest university in the south-west of Germany. On the other hand, she noted that UB had an interesting profile hence the need to forge a partnership in areas of environmental science, educational sciences and humanities. She said the collaboration would expand to areas such as artificial intelligence and research projects.



RPTU delegation with UB Management after the signing of the MoU.



UB and Diamonds for Development Fund Explore Research Partnerships

Professor David Norris discussing with Dr Mathew Chadwick

University of Botswana (UB) Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, says UB and the Diamonds for Development Fund have numerous opportunities for collaboration in research areas such as renewable energy and solar power, tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, and mining.

Professor Norris said this during a recent

courtesy visit to UB by the Diamonds for Development Fund delegation. The delegation comprised Diamonds for Development Fund Project Director, Mr Jon Samuel and Head of Programmes, Dr Mathew Chadwick. The purpose of the visit was to explore possible areas of establishing partnerships to support government aspirations on the development and diversification of Botswana's economy and Vision 2036.

Professor Norris stated that UB was undergoing transformation to become more relevant and impactful to society. He noted that for many years, UB focused primarily on human capital development, which led to a lag in innovation and research. He emphasised that the new strategic direction of UB was now geared towards becoming researchintensive, fostering innovation and enhancing value chains.

He underscored the importance of product development and its subsequent release within an ecosystem that supported it, including the private sector, government and civil society. He added that UB students demonstrated considerable talent, as evidenced by their innovative products. Diamonds for Development Fund Head of Programmes, Dr Matthew Chadwick, said the Fund was

established recently as a sequel to a new lease agreement between Botswana Government and De Beers to support the development and diversification of Botswana's economy and vision 2036.

Dr Chadwick noted that the Fund was independent of the Government and DeBeers. He said the Fund was looking for partnership with institutions such as UB to realise its mandate. He observed that the Fund was still at foundation stage that included good development

programming, research on economic opportunities in Botswana and drafting governance policies as well as structure. In addition, Dr Chadwick said key areas of high opportunity included renewable energy and solar, tourism, agriculture, manufacturing and mining. He further noted that other small sectors they were looking to promote included sports, culture and arts. Again, he said they were looking forward to financing research studies as well as small businesses.



Some members of the UB Management who attended the meeting.

UB Team Participate In OSCAR 2.0 In Amsterdam



Botswana and Zambia, promoting a culture of open and collaborative research that can drive societal and economic development in the region. The collaboration with European universities will enable UB to strengthen its academic, research and networking capabilities, ultimately contributing to the development of a robust knowledge-based economy.

Accordingly, the University of Botswana's involvement in the OSCAR 2.0 project underscores its dedication to international collaboration and its role as a leader in higher education and research in Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, the visit to the Netherlands was just the beginning of what promises to be a transformative journey towards greater academic and research excellence. University of Botswana (UB) Team Visits Netherlands for OSCAR 2.0 Open Science Initiative.

The University of Botswana (UB) team in Amsterdam for the OSCAR 2.0 Open Science Research Initiative

A team from the University of Botswana (UB) recently visited Amsterdam, Netherlands as part of the OSCAR 2.0 Open Science Research Initiative funded by the European Commission.

The OSCAR 2.0 project, which stands for Open Science Collaboration and Research in Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa, commenced in February 2024 and will run for up to three (3) years. The project aligns seamlessly with UB's commitment to advance Open Science and promote transparent research practices.

Deputy Vice Chancellor-Teaching and Learning, Professor Richard Tabulawa, led the team comprising Director of Library Services, Dr Alphege Maisire, Head of the Computer Science Department, Dr Edwin Thuma and enior Lecturer, Dr George Anderson, to present on the University of Botswana's role and objectives within the OSCAR 2.0 project. Further, the aim was to deliberate and support Open Science policy development at both institutional and national levels. Consequently, the visit to the Netherlands by the UB team

marked the beginning of an innovative project aimed at fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation among researchers in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in Botswana and Zambia. The OSCAR 2.0 project team is Led by Dr. Audrey Naledi Masizana and comprises key members from the Computer Science department:

Dr Anderson, Mr Bigani Sehurutshi and Mr Monkgogi Mudongo. The initiative aims to prepare and capacitate targeted participants within HEIs through capacity building working (CBW) programmes, including study visits to EU partners. The programmes are designed to develop an Open Science Framework in their institutions. Dr Masizana expressed excitement about the project, stating, "The OSCAR 2.0 initiative is a significant step towards enhancing research collaboration and transparency within our institution and beyond. We are committed to fostering an environment that supports Open Science and Innovation." The OSCAR 2.0 project is expected to bring substantial benefits to the academic and research communities in



Professor Richard Tabulawa leading the presentations.

Prof Norris Commends Boteti Youth for Academic Excellence at Diamond Dreams Awards



One of the students who received awards.

The University of Botswana (UB) Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, has commended Orapa and Letlhakane Diamond Mine (OLDM) for its dedication to promoting academic prowess among young Botswana.

Professor Norris was speaking at the annual OLD M Diamond Dreams Awards held at Mopipi Junior Secondary School on the 11th of July 2024 where he was invited as the guest speaker.

The Awards were held to honour outstanding academic achievements across primary, Junior and Senior secondary schools in the Boteti Region. The event, now in its 4th edition, demonstrates the region's commitment to nurturing educational excellence.

Professor Norris underscored the importance of a knowledge-based economy and encouraged the students to embrace entrepreneurship and innovation as key to their success in the modern era. "I congratulate Boteti's young achievers on their stellar performances," said Professor

Norris, urging them to persevere in overcoming challenges and leveraging their talents with a positive outlook on the future.

OLD M Assistant General Manager, Mr Ditiro Lentswe, observed that through the Company's Corporate Social Investment Programme (CSR) has for the past four years been contributing P500 000 annually towards the Diamond Dreams Awards.

The initiative is part of Debswana's broader «Building Forever Strategy 2030,» aimed at fostering self-sufficiency and competitiveness in Boteti beyond the mine's closure. To that end, Mr Lentswe underscored OLD M's commitment to education as a catalyst for sustainable community development beyond diamond mining. A Geologist at Debswana and Learner Official, Ms Tshephang Mogae, in her motivational address applauded the perseverance and dedication of the

awardees and educators alike. Ms Mogae encouraged the students to forge lasting academic relationships and aim higher in their educational pursuits.

Area Councilor, Mr Ofentse Gabalatlhane, expressed gratitude to Debswana for its continuous support in advancing the Boteti region and further thanked Professor Norris for his inspiring words to the students. He also acknowledged the tireless efforts of educators in guiding and shaping the students as Botswana future leaders.

The Diamond Dreams Awards ceremony not only celebrates academic excellence but also underscores the transformative impact of education in preparing Boteti youth for a globally competitive future. As the region strives towards becoming a hub for innovation and self-reliance, initiatives such as these reaffirm the community's resilience and commitment to building a prosperous future beyond mining.



One of the teachers receiving a cheque for P14 000 for outstanding performance from Debswana Mine.



Prof Norris urges policy makers to create nurturing environment to empower youth



Professor Bontle Mbongwe presenting certificates to winners.



University of Botswana (UB) Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, has called on policymakers and leaders across various sectors to create a nurturing environment for young people. The Vice Chancellor underscored the importance of empowering young people so that they could devise their own solutions to emerging challenges in health and education. Speaking at the official opening of the 5th edition of the Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC) recently, Professor Norris highlighted

the importance of including young people in key decisions-making processes, noting that transformative changes in the African economy depended on the well-being of youth. He urged young people to unapologetically cement their position in the transformation agenda and foster meaningful collaborations among themselves.

Professor Norris commended UB students for their active participation at the conference which ends on Friday. He highlighted the significance of the conference in addressing vital health and education issues affecting young people across the southern African region. ■

UB Chancellor urges SAUDC cohort to revive spirit of dialogue



UB Chancellor, Ms Tebelelo Mazile Seretse motivating the students.

University of Botswana (UB) Chancellor Her Excellency, Ms Tebelelo Mazile Seretse, has called upon participants of the 2024 Southern African Universities Debate Championship (SAUDC) to revive the spirit of debate in universities to support democracy and economic growth across Africa.

Ms Seretse made the remarks during the official opening of the 2024 SAUDC held at UB on the 8th of July 2024. The Chancellor regretted that democracy had been on the decline in many African countries as opinions were often muffled to please the powers that be. She observed that it was upon university students to bring

back dialogue among communities in a respectable manner through debate. Ms Seretse underscored an undeniable aspect of debate that when someone speaks, others must listen quietly, which she regarded as a sign of respect.



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Some of the participants of Southern African Universities Debate Championship (SAUDC) posing with University of Botswana officials.

UB freshers encouraged to embrace a transformative mindset



University of Botswana (UB) Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, has encouraged new students to cultivate a transformative mindset. He urged them to creatively harness their knowledge and skills to tackle societal challenges and drive personal empowerment. Professor Norris was addressing new student during an orientation held at the UB Campus Indoor Sports Centre on the 23rd of July 2024. He encouraged the students to embrace an entrepreneurial spirit and aim to become drivers of Botswana's economy rather than just job seekers. He advised them to leverage UB as a hub for developing their entrepreneurial skills and nurturing innovative business ideas.



Public Affairs Director, Dr Faith Rapuleng-Tuelo, presenting on the importance of safeguarding the UB Brand.



Members of the SRC addressing the students.



Mr Selebaleng Mmapatsi on emotional intelligence issues.

UB Hosts Workshop to Empower Protection Services Employees in Managing Restructuring Stress

University of Botswana (UB) Department of Careers and Counselling Deputy Director, Mr Selebaleng Mmapatsi has encouraged UB Protection Services employees to anticipate restructuring stress by developing the right emotions, cognitions and behaviour to survive the stress.

Mr Mmapatsi was speaking during a Protection Services Professional Empowerment Workshop held at UB Business Block 245 on the 27th of June 2024. The objective of the workshop was to provide the employees with an opportunity to discuss anticipatory stress, understand psychological effects of retrenchment and to acquire the skills to deal with effects of restructuring.

Mr Mmapatsi encouraged the employee to manage restructuring and retrenchment stress by adopting and accepting change, looking around for new opportunities as well as being open minded. He advised the participants to monitor the situation and let go of fear as well as to embrace change and move on with life.

He urged the participants to network and surround themselves with positive people. The participants were advised to plan, monitor and adjust finances. In addition, Mr Mmapatsi spoke about the importance of exercising, resting and good nutrition to

cope with stress. Botswana Police Service Inspector Aobakwe Motlhagodi advised UB Protection Services employees to work in partnership with the police in the fight against crime by protecting property as well as individual lives. He advised the employees to refrain from unethical practices and to ensure safety within the UB campus. Financial Advisor, Mr Calvin

Phokontsi, advised the participants to develop good financial habits and to set thresholds. The participants were urged to work towards reducing debt to improve financial health. Mr Phokontsi further encouraged them to have investment plans to maximise long term returns in addition to creating saving plan and sticking to a budget.



Some members of the University of Botswana Protection Services listening to the proceedings of the workshop.

RPTU Delegation Visits University of Botswana to Renew Long-Standing Collaboration

A delegation from the Rheinland-Pfälzische Technische Universität Kaiserslautern-Landau (RPTU) was this month on a work visit to the University of Botswana (UB) to discuss and renew a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as well as evaluate collaboration of the (2) two institutions entered into since 2005.

The partnership has thus far facilitated an exchange programme where students and faculty members from UB's English Department studied at RPTU in Germany while RPTU students experienced academic life at UB.

During deliberations, Acting Head of the Department of English, Professor Mompoloki Bagwasi, underscored the importance of evaluating the outcomes of the exchange programme to identify areas for improvement.

"Our goal is to assess both the positive and negative aspects of the initiative to enhance its effectiveness moving forward,"



RPTU delegation after a tour of the University of Botswana facilities.

Professor Bagwasi stated Co-President of RPTU, Professor Gabriele Schaumann, highlighted the potential expansion of the collaboration indicating that the renewal of the MoU would not only focus on the English Department but encompass other areas such as Research, Environmental Science, as well as other academic offerings from UB. The two-day visit included

a courtesy visit to UB's Executive Management, the official renewal of the MoU, faculty meetings and a tour of UB facilities, including the Media Studies studios, Faculty of Engineering and Technology labs as well as Visual and Performing Arts studios.

Professor Bontle Mbongwe and Dr Chilindi Maloiso Participate in a Research Indaba



Professor of Environmental Health at the University of Botswana (UB), Professor Bontle Mbongwe and Director of UB Clinic, Dr Chilindi Maloiso recently participated in a Research Indaba at the Southern African Regional Students and Youth Consortium (SARSYC) Youth Summit at Travelodge. High-level delegates who attended the conference were the SADC Parliamentary Forum Secretary General, Parliamentarians and Students from SADC countries. Participants discussed the reproductive health of young

people and contributions to International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 agenda. Professor Mbongwe and Dr Maloiso also signed the three books that were launched at the Research Indaba (A SADC Regional Perspective by Young People on COVID-19; Empowering Young Voices-Unveiling the Hidden Realities of Young People in Zimbabwe; Breaking the Cycle- Overcoming Drug and Substance Abuse Among Young People in Zimbabwe).

Professor Bontle Mbongwe signing some of the books that were unveiled at the Youth Summit.

Hard hitting Karabo Motshwarakgole wins UB Open Boxing Tournament gold medal



Karabo Motshwarakgole, a standout boxer from the University of Botswana (UB) Boxing Club, has won a gold medal in the 63.5kg category at the UB Open Boxing Tournament.

Motshwarakgole secured his victory after a fierce bout against Nonofo Molatlhegi of EMG Boxing Club, held at the UB Student Centre recently. The referee stopped the contest in the second round after Molatlhegi sustained an injury (RSC – I R2), resulting in an automatic win for Motshwarakgole. Another UB boxer, Arata Dikhai, also won a bronze medal.

Other UB boxers in the 51kg category namely Cedric Baroma and Tshephang Nkagisang won Silver and Bronze respectively while Katlego Keorapetse, Kabelo Baipaakanyi, Arata Dikhai and Tiragalo Nathane settled for Bronze in the 54kg, 63.5kg, 67kg and 63kg respectively. ■

UB Hawks hold trials to scout for new talent



On the 24th of July 2024, University of Botswana (UB) Hawks Football Club held soccer trials to scout and identify emerging talent not yet affiliated with elite academies.

The trials were aimed at recruiting promising young athletes with the potential to develop into successful professional players, filling gaps in the current squad of experienced players.

Selection criteria focused on key attributes such as teamwork, spatial awareness, risk assessment, responsibility, self-motivation, leadership, mental toughness, passion and drive. Technical skills such as ball control, dribbling and running with the ball, as well as physical attributes including power, strength, speed, and stamina, were also evaluated. ■

UB Giants softball teams (men and women) strive for excellence



The University of Botswana (UB) Softball Teams (Men and Women) are committed to enhancing their performance in order to become champions of the Botswana Softball Association Extravaganza (BSAE) in the next season. Despite recent challenges at the BSAE tournament held at the Botswana National Softball Diamond Field and UB where both teams faced tough competition, they are determined to make a strong comeback. The UB Giants are

focusing on improving their players' skills and fitness to ensure better performance in future games. The teams are working diligently on various skills such as catching, hitting for power, throwing, running, hitting for contact, pitching, and on-field communication. With this renewed focus and dedication, the UB Giants are poised to elevate their game and achieve excellence in the upcoming season.■

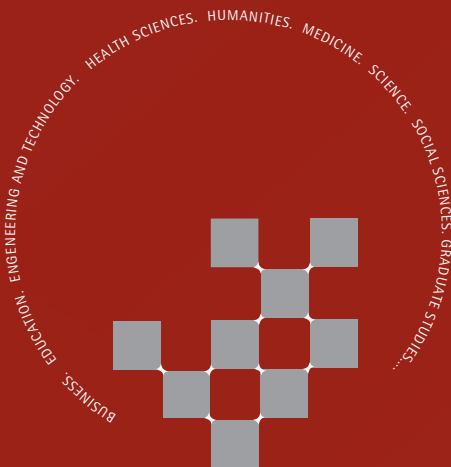
UB Darts and Zoopers Darts Club Host Second Annual Women's Tournament

Bafedile Dube has retained her title as the Zoopers Darts Club Annual Women's Tournament Champion, winning the grand prize of P2,200. The tournament saw over 20 competitors vying for the top spot, with a total prize pool of P8,000.

Boipelo Machacha finished in second place, losing 0-4 to the reigning champion Dube, and took home P1,600. Notably, 14-year-old Atang Thepelo reached the semifinals, defeating Ashley Monowe 3-1 in the Top 16 before being bested by Dube. Thepelo received P850, along

with the other semifinalists. Among the UB Darts competitors, Charity Bapaphi was knocked out of the Top 8 after a 3-0 loss to Lone Monwe. Lenna Kolobe and Gaone Ishmael both placed fifth in their group stages, each losing four games and failing to advance to the Top 16.

Quarterfinalists were awarded P600 each, while the highest finishers received P100. Sponsors Haskins, Tork Craft, and Ian Dickie provided additional merchandise prizes to the winners.■



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VISION

To be a leading centre of academic excellence in Africa and the world

MISSION

To improve economic and social conditions for the Nation while advancing itself as a distinctively African university with a regional and international outlook.



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