



UB to Spearhead Heritage Preservation

We have a rich heritage but we have not been doing enough to preserve it – Professor Norris



Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris (5th left) with ambassadors from France and Germany as well as other team members on tour of Matsieng heritage site.

The University of Botswana (UB) has demonstrated its commitment to spearheading national efforts to protect Botswana's rich yet increasingly threatened cultural heritage. Speaking at a high-level

stakeholder engagement on heritage and knowledge development, Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, underscored the urgent need to preserve traditional practices, indigenous knowledge and historical sites to

ensure they were not lost to future generations.

"We have a rich heritage but we have not been doing enough to preserve it. If we do not act

[continues to page 3](#)



Page 5

UB Degree Show Winner Wame Mokalake Awarded Postgraduate Scholarship



Page 6

UB Partners with Germany's Falling Walls Foundation to Launch Innovation Lab



Page 12

Gambling Authority, Debswana Push Digital Communication at UB Conference





EDITOR'S NOTE – JULY 2025

Dear Reader,

The July issue of the UB Newsletter once again reminds us that the University of Botswana (UB) is more than a centre of academic instruction. It is a living institution where knowledge meets creativity, innovation, community service and sporting excellence.

Preserving cultural heritage remains one of our defining responsibilities. UB has committed to spearheading initiatives that safeguard and celebrate Botswana's rich traditions to ensure that they continue to inform identity, pride and progress for generations to come.

This issue also shines a light on the Degree Show 2025 where design graduates challenged the status quo, highlighting the powerful role of women in design, innovation and economic development. At the UNIPOD Hackathon, student innovators stepped up to confront pressing health sector challenges. A team of six Bachelor of Science students partnered with the Gaborone City Council to address landfill management. These examples underline how student-led research and initiatives are increasingly shaping solutions to national and community challenges.

Our researchers also continue to provide critical insights that inform policy. The study on the lower uptake of PrEP beyond key populations demonstrates UB's

ongoing role in addressing Botswana's public health concerns, drawing particular attention to barriers such as stigma, fear of side effects and access constraints.

Beyond research and innovation, UB continues to nurture holistic talent. Our judo teams' outstanding performance at the 2025 South African Championships shows the balance we strive to achieve between academic excellence and sporting achievement. Equally, the success of Dukwi refugee students, now set to receive sponsorships, is a powerful reminder of education's ability to transform lives and create opportunities regardless of circumstance.

Taken together, these stories illustrate the breadth and impact of UB's work through impactful stakeholder collaborations, student-led innovation and research that addresses real-world issues. They remind us that UB is not an ivory tower but a partner in national development and a catalyst for empowerment. As you read through this issue, I invite you to reflect on the partnerships, student initiatives and research excellence highlighted here. They are clear markers of UB's role as a catalyst for societal progress, cultural preservation and human development.

Warm regards,

Thomas T. Nkhoma

Highlights...



University of Botswana Signs MoU with Techsol Training Services (PTY) Ltd

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Ambassador H.E. Gabriela Bennemann sharing insights on German heritage preservation initiatives.

now, the next generation will not even know it existed," said Professor Norris. He lamented that while tourism in Botswana often focused on well-known destinations such as the Okavango Delta, significant historical sites like Manyana and Shoshong among others remained overlooked.

Highlighting the economic potential of heritage, Professor Norris urged for the integration of heritage conservation into national development strategies. "This is not just about culture; it's a business opportunity. We must work with government and partners to take ownership. Soon we might not even find a single traditional hut standing," he warned.

UB, he noted, has the human capital, expertise and research capability to lead this transformation. "We have made great strides in developing human capital and contributing to the global knowledge ecosystem. But now, we must also drive innovation rooted in our own history, culture and identity," said Professor Norris. He cited missed opportunities such as the closure of the Selebi-Phikwe mine without sustainable economic alternatives, arguing that Botswana must now diversify and develop new heritage-based products for commercial use.

For her part, Dr Susan Keitumetse, UNESCO Chair of African Heritage Studies and Sustainable Development at the University of Botswana, echoed the Vice Chancellor's sentiments, stating that heritage must be seen as a knowledge asset that informed policy and drove development.

"We need to spread our knowledge across the world but we must start by integrating cultural knowledge into our campuses. Our African languages, traditional crafts like hide processing and indigenous philosophies are grossly underrepresented on the global stage," she said.

She also cautioned against relying on outdated policy frameworks derived from foreign models, calling instead for a renewed emphasis on community-based heritage preservation and the promotion of localised knowledge systems.

Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Professor Thapelo Otlogetswe, highlighted UB's Memorandum of Understanding with the Botswana Society and urged concerted national efforts to preserve all forms of heritage including traditional cuisine. "Botswana never used to grapple with non-communicable diseases. But since we shifted from traditional diets to modern ones, the country is now

facing an alarming rise in lifestyle diseases," he pointed out.

He also cited the Dithubaruba Festival as a significant cultural event in Molepolole, noting that few people realised it commemorated a historic battle involving the Bakwena. "Most of our travellers don't know Dithubaruba was about a war. We need to start educating our people about the meanings behind these cultural events," he urged.

German Ambassador to Botswana, Her Excellency Gabriella Bennemann, highlighted Germany's commitment to cultural exchange, noting that Setswana was taught in one German institution. She underscored the importance of building synergies through research. "Research must break walls between disciplines to find real-world solutions. Universities must be at the centre of this," she observed.

French Ambassador to Botswana, His Excellency Olivier Brochenin, highlighted France's collaboration with the Botswana National Museum and expressed eagerness to strengthen ties by linking the University of Botswana with French universities. "Museums should work with universities to improve heritage management. We also need to listen more to communities, they know what's worth preserving," he noted, adding that food and language were vital cultural elements that deserved formal policy protection.

From jewellery and fashion design to language, food and traditional architecture, stakeholders agreed that Botswana's heritage offered vast potential for development. UB is ready to lead the charge, not only to preserve the past but to build a culturally rich and economically vibrant future ■



Degree Show 2025 Challenges Status Quo on Empowerment of Design Graduates

Highlights Role of Women in Design, Innovation and Economic Development

The 2025 University of Botswana (UB) Degree Show delivered a powerful statement on the future of design and innovation in Botswana, firmly challenging the status quo on empowerment of young graduates particularly women in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

Held annually by the Department of Industrial Design and Technology, the Degree Show has grown to become a premier platform for final-year students to showcase their research, creativity and commercially viable solutions. This year's edition was particularly significant as it was premised on *empowering women in Design*, a bold stance underscoring that design and construction industries are spaces where women belong, contribute meaningfully and must be recognised.

Welcoming guests at the ceremony Vice Chancellor, **Professor David Norris**, used the occasion to call for transformative reforms in how institutions, industry, and society support emerging talent.

"Our young people are very, very talented," said Prof. Norris. "But we have failed to create an environment where they can thrive through their creativity and innovation."

Professor Norris also reaffirmed UB's commitment to strengthening a comprehensive research and innovation ecosystem, spanning from blue-sky research to prototype development and eventual commercialisation. He urged universities across the region to



Dr Mathews Olyn explaining how Wame Moklake's (3rd left) winning project functions.

position themselves as drivers of economic growth through strategic partnerships with industry.

A total of **30 student projects** were showcased, covering diverse areas such as interior design, product innovation and sustainable building technologies. The work on display not only reflected sound academic grounding but also demonstrated the power of design thinking in solving real-world challenges and contributing to national development.

A distinctive feature of this year's show was Video testimonials that provided an intimate glimpse into the journeys of female students who defied stereotypes and carved out paths for themselves in technology and design fields that had historically sidelined women.

Guest speakers, Ms Nomsa Moyo, founder of Sasa Interior and Ms Thandi Leineweber, founder of Phoenix Style Ambassadors, shared their experiences as pioneering women entrepreneurs in design. Both emphasised the need for resilience, mentorship and inclusive education as critical factors in helping young women take their place in the industry.

"This is our space too," said one female graduate

in a featured testimonial. "We are not guests here we are builders, creators, innovators. And we are ready," she expressed

The 2025 Degree Show has once again proven to be more than a student exhibition. It was a call to action for the academia, industry and government to invest in the creative potential of Botswana's youth and to ensure that women are not only included but champion the journey towards a more innovative and equitable future.■



Among the highlights was a student innovation that drew significant attention from attendees.

UB Degree Show Winner Wame Mokalake Awarded Postgraduate Scholarship

'Winning this award reminded me that our skills as industrial designers are not just tools for creativity but instruments for impact.'



UB Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, presenting an award to the 2025 Degree Show winner, Wame Mokalake.



Mokalake's project- FERTIGO, an ergonomically designed wheelbarrow..

Innovation, purpose, and a passion for community-driven design converged in a defining moment at the 2025 University of Botswana (UB) Degree Show, where Wame Shaun Mokalake emerged the top winner. His ingenuity earned him not only top honours but also a prestigious postgraduate scholarship awarded by UB Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris.

Hosted annually by the Department of Industrial Design and Technology, the Degree Show celebrates the creative achievements of its graduating class. This year, Mokalake's project – an ergonomically designed wheelbarrow named *FERTIGO* – captivated judges and audiences alike with its practical relevance, thoughtful execution and potential to ease everyday burdens for local farmers.

Designed specifically for distributing manure on farms and gardens, *FERTIGO* is a user-centred solution that combines manual operation with enhanced functionality, offering improved

maneuver in tight and uneven spaces. It addresses a pressing need among Botswana's farming communities by reducing physical strain and increasing productivity in agricultural tasks.

"Design, to me, is about better balance, improved ergonomics and easier handling," Mokalake shared. *"FERTIGO is lighter, stronger and, if I may say, so easier on the eye. It's a reminder that design doesn't have to be loud to be life changing. Sometimes, innovation means making work less painful or restoring dignity to daily labour."*

Reflecting on the award, Mokalake expressed a deep sense of gratitude and commitment. "To be named the 2025 Degree Show winner for the Department of Industrial Design feels surreal," he said, noting that the accolade reaffirmed his belief in design as a tool for social good.

"Winning this award reminded me that our skills as industrial designers are not just tools for creativity they are instruments for impact. We are called to serve, to innovate, to imagine

a better world and to build it," he added.

Mokalake intends to use the postgraduate scholarship to deepen his research in sustainable, community based product development. His vision includes mentoring young designers and creating solutions that draw from Botswana's rich cultural heritage.

"I envision a future where design is deeply connected to local knowledge and traditions, creating products that are not only functional but also culturally resonant," he said.

His journey is a powerful example of how design, when rooted in empathy and purpose, can shape lives and transform communities one idea at a time.

The 2025 Degree Show also celebrated the achievements of other talented students. Elijah Mujokeri secured second place while Abel Nkambule came third, highlighting the depth of talent within the Department of Industrial Design and Technology ■

UB Partners with Germany's Falling Walls Foundation to Launch Innovation Lab

Lab offers a unique opportunity for Master's students, PhD candidates, post-doctoral researchers and early-career professionals

University of Botswana (UB), in collaboration with Berlin-based Falling Walls Foundation in Germany, officially launched the Falling Walls Lab at the University Innovation Pod (UNIPOD) on Tuesday. The initiative is a globally recognised platform aimed at fostering scientific and social innovation by empowering young researchers and promoting the impactful communication of breakthrough ideas.

The Falling Walls Lab offers a unique opportunity for Master's students, PhD candidates, post-doctoral researchers and early-career professionals to present their pioneering ideas in just three minutes. Winners from UB's lab will secure a spot in the prestigious global finale in Berlin, where they will compete with other top talents from across the world.

Speaking during the launch, UB Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, reiterated the University's commitment to promoting a robust research and innovation ecosystem. He emphasised that such an ecosystem was vital for sustainable development and knowledge exchange.

"UB is determined to build an innovation-driven environment that catalyses collaboration among diverse actors. This approach is key to creating solutions that are sustainable and inclusive," he said.



Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, Federal Republic of Germany Ambassador, H.E. Gabriel Bennemann and Ministry of High Education Permanent Secretary, Professor Nelson Toto, at the official launch of Falling Walls Foundation Lab at UB.

Professor Norris further stressed the importance of investing in youth talent, citing their adaptability, creativity and entrepreneurial potential as critical drivers of future economic growth.

Representing the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, **Ambassador Gabriela Bennemann** lauded the initiative, describing the *Falling Walls* concept as a powerful metaphor.

"Falling Walls is about dismantling physical and mental barriers – walls that divide people, institutions, ideas and opportunities. Today's launch signifies Botswana's readiness to bridge gaps between science and society, policy and implementation, research and economy," said Ambassador Bennemann.

She highlighted Germany's determination to deepen its cooperation with Botswana particularly in areas of scientific exchange, skills development and inclusive innovation.

The launch also featured an introduction to Falling Walls Engage, a complementary platform that celebrates outstanding science engagement efforts. The programme focuses on bridging the gap between research communities and the broader public by showcasing projects

that translate complex scientific knowledge into accessible and meaningful societal contributions.

Having Botswana's inclusion in the Falling Walls network, the country now joins a global movement aimed at breaking down barriers to knowledge exchange and scientific progress.

The launch marked a significant milestone in the University's international partnerships reinforcing its positioning as a hub for innovation, research excellence and youth empowerment ■



Federal Republic of Germany Ambassador, H.E. Gabriel Bennemann, launching the Falling Walls Lab.

UB Hosts 5th International Conference on Academic and Professional Communication

Serves as a platform for dialogue and collaboration on emerging trends and innovations in academic and professional communication

University of Botswana's Department of Communication and Study Skills Unit successfully hosted the Fifth International Conference on Academic and Professional Communication (ICAPC) which took place at the University Library Auditorium from the 16th–18th July 2025.

Themed "Shaping the Future: Trends and Approaches to Academic and Professional Communication in a Digital Era", the conference brought together academics, researchers, educators and industry professionals from across Africa and beyond.

Now in its fifth edition, ICAPC has become a platform for dialogue and collaboration on emerging trends and innovations in academic and professional communication especially in light of technological advancement and digital transformation.

Speaking at the official opening, Director of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD), Dr Lovie E. Seru, highlighted the evolution of ICAPC into a leading academic platform. "Digital transformation is no longer a future vision. It is our present reality. Artificial intelligence is reshaping the way we write, research and interact," said Dr Seru. He added that the conference fostered collective reflection and forward-thinking strategies to meet the demands of a rapidly changing digital world. Chairperson of the 5th ICAPC, Dr Irene M. Segopolo, shared that this year's theme focused on how emerging theoretical and methodological approaches to communication were adapting in the digital era. She revealed



Participants of the 5th ICAPC 2025

that 51 peer-reviewed abstracts were accepted, covering a broad spectrum of subthemes. "We are hosting delegates from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe," she said.

Delivering the official opening remarks, Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Professor Richard Tabulawa, commended the Communication and Study Skills Unit for spearheading the conference. "The University of Botswana is undergoing a transformation to become a high-performance institution. Conferences such as ICAPC reflect our commitment to research, innovation and digital integration in higher education," he noted.

One of the keynote speakers, Professor Samuel Amponsah from the University of Ghana, delivered an address on digital transformation and sustainable academic networking. He underscored the importance of addressing Africa's digital divide through investment in infrastructure, digital literacy and the



Debswana Executive Head of Corporate Affairs, Ms Rachel Mothibatsela.

development of localised content.

The conference features keynote speeches, panel discussions and individual oral presentations, all aligned with the central theme. It provided a platform for knowledge exchange, cross-border collaboration and critical engagement with global communication trends.

As the three-day conference concludes, it leaves behind a shared commitment to advancing academic and professional communication for impact, equity and innovation in the digital era

UNiPOD Unleash Hackathon Incubation Kicks Off with Winning Start

UB Student Innovators Tackle Botswana's Health Sector Challenges Head-On

University of Botswana's innovation and entrepreneurship hub, UNiPOD, recently launched its much anticipated Unleash Hackathon Incubation phase with resounding success. Over the course of an intense and collaborative week, six teams of aspiring student entrepreneurs participated in an intensive two-day hackathon, conducted field visits to the Sir Ketumile Masire Teaching Hospital (SKMTH) and the UB Clinic and wrapped up with a high-stakes pitch competition targeting pressing challenges in Botswana's health sector.

The programme, which bridges classroom theory and real-world application, gave students a unique opportunity to co-create innovative, tech-driven solutions for some of the nation's most pressing public health challenges. The initiative drew participation from multidisciplinary teams, with each group presenting their prototype solutions to a panel of expert judges, investors and stakeholders from the health and innovation sectors.

Emerging victorious from the pitch event was Primer Health, a team of six forward-thinking students, comprising five Computer Science postgraduates and one undergraduate Pharmacy student. Their project, which took first place, focuses on disease detection, outbreak prediction, and real-time alerting systems designed to inform relevant authorities and enable rapid contingency planning.

At the heart of Primer Health's innovation lies a commitment to using artificial intelligence and data analytics to strengthen Botswana's public health infrastructure. Their prototype aims to monitor trends in health data, identify

early warning signs of disease outbreaks and improve the country's ability to respond swiftly and effectively.

Meet the Winning Team

- **Ms Srividya Nanduri**, a final-year Computer Science undergraduate, is driven by a passion for continuous learning and applying technology for social impact. She aspires to contribute to meaningful healthcare innovation upon graduating in October 2025.

- **Ms Favour Williams**, also set to graduate in October 2025 with a degree in Computer Science, brings a strong focus on data-driven problem-solving. Her interest lies in front-end development and leveraging AI/ML to improve public health access.

- **Mr Bryne Mndolo**, a fellow Computer Science student, is focused on user experience design, front-end systems and the creation of accessible digital health platforms. He also brings experience in artificial intelligence and software engineering.

- **Mr Nderitu Ndungo**, with a sharp eye for system architecture, aims to build tools that enhance operational efficiency across sectors. His tech-driven mindset is matched with a dedication to practical, scalable solutions.

- **Mr Kondwani Kadzongwe**, a Computer Science undergraduate and current Master's student, is passionate about digital transformation in the public sector. He is especially focused on developing AI-driven tools that can help solve major societal issues.

- **Mr Daniel Williams**, the sole Pharmacy student on the team, offers a distinctive perspective. With a passion for synthetic biology, innovation



Ms. SRIVIDYA NANDURI - Team leader of PRIMER HEALTH Group



Mr. BRYNE MNDOLO - Designer of the PRIMER HEALTH GROUP APPLICATION & Website.

and interdisciplinary exploration, Daniel plays a critical role in bridging the gap between technology and clinical science.

The Unleash Hackathon Incubation phase marks an important milestone in UB's commitment to nurturing innovation that directly responds to national needs. By equipping students with platforms to test their ideas, collaborate across disciplines and receive feedback from industry experts, the University of Botswana continues to empower the next generation of change-makers.

As Primer Health progresses to the next stage of incubation, their journey serves as an inspiring example of what is possible when academic knowledge meets real-world challenges. The future of healthcare innovation in Botswana is not just promising. It is already taking shape ■

Lower Uptake of PrEP beyond key populations in Botswana May Drive HIV Transmission

Could be exacerbated by factors such as lack of awareness, perceived risk, fear of side effects, stigma and access barriers



Participants of the Stakeholder Meeting on Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) uptake among the general public.

University of Botswana (UB) Faculty of Health Sciences Acting Deputy Dean, Professor Nthabiseng Phaladze, has warned that the low uptake of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) in Botswana poses a significant risk of rising new HIV infections. Professor Phaladze made these remarks on the 25th of July 2025 during a stakeholder meeting held at the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) to evaluate implementation strategies for the GenPopPrEP study which focuses on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) uptake among the general population in Botswana.

The purpose of the meeting was to share the study pre-pilot preliminary findings, engage in meaningful dialogue about the study goals and most importantly gather insights and feedback to inform study strategies that could improve accessibility and effectiveness of PrEP service in communities across Botswana. Furthermore,

Professor Phaladze noted that low PrEP uptake hindered progress towards achieving global HIV prevention targets and reducing the overall burden of the disease.

She said comprehensive and targeted awareness campaigns were crucial to educate individuals about PrEP and its benefits. She further highlighted that lower uptake of PrEP could be exacerbated by factors such as lack of awareness, perceived risk, fear of side effects, stigma and access barriers.

Ministry of Health PrEP Coordinator, Mrs Banyana Piet, indicated that the ministry was faced with several challenges in CAB-LA uptake including low eligibility and demand, poor retention, inequitable programme preference, shortage of reagents, attitudes of healthcare providers and lower reporting. Highlighting on the strategies to improve PrEP uptake, Mrs Piet said the

ministry was focused on increasing awareness, addressing stigma, simplifying access, providing tailored support and integrating PrEP services with other health initiatives.

The study behavioural scientist, Ms Keonayang Kgotlaetsile, shared that preliminary pre-pilot results indicated that while stigma towards PrEP use was generally low, findings still suggested a perceived need to conceal PrEP use. Findings highlight positive attitudes toward PrEP, citing benefits for personal health protection and reducing anxiety about HIV. Trust in health care providers and clinics emerged as a key factor for obtaining PrEP information, with primary care providers preferred for initial prescriptions. Among proposed delivery strategies, adherence buddies and community-based distribution were viewed most favourably whereas telehealth and postal delivery options received comparatively lower support ■.

UB Partners with Gaborone City Council to Tackle Landfill Challenges through Research

Partnership initiated by a team of six (6) final-year Bachelor of Science students



Dr Marks Ditlhogo, Senior Lecture, Faculty of Science, delivering the partnership presentation to Gaborone City Council

University of Botswana (UB) has partnered with the Gaborone City Council (GCC) to address long-standing operational and environmental challenges at Gamodubu Regional Landfill. The partnership is part of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities (EPIC) programme, an initiative that fosters collaboration between universities and local authorities to address community challenges through research and innovation. The UB-GCC partnership was initiated by a team of six (6) final-year Bachelor of Science students,

working under the supervision of Dr Marks Ditlhogo, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Biological Sciences, embarking on research projects at the Gamodubu Regional Landfill. The projects were integral to the students' academic training while simultaneously generating critical data for GCC to support informed decision-making in managing the landfill.

The student-led research stems from a field visit to the landfill where the team engaged with site managers and began collecting data to guide evidence-based interventions. Their aim is to develop practical and cost-effective solutions for longstanding challenges at the facility.

Among the most pressing concerns raised by the landfill management was the frequent overflow of leachate (from the leachate pond) during heavy rains, which threatened nearby villages and river systems downstream with potential heavy metal pollution. There was also fear that underground water sources, crops, soil organisms and nearby vegetation could be contaminated with heavy metals from the leachate overflow. Other persistent problems included inadequate maintenance and undersized equipment and absence of a landfill

gas monitoring system.

Lack of waste segregation at the source further complicated landfill operations while Botswana's absence of recycling infrastructure meant most waste ended up permanently buried. A shortage of trained personnel remained another critical bottleneck.

Despite these systemic issues, initial findings from soil sampling offered some cautious optimism. Research conducted by the UB team revealed no significant differences in levels of heavy metals – such as chromium, iron, copper, lead and zinc – between soil exposed to leachate and unaffected areas.

This indicates that the leachate, while a concern, may not currently pose an immediate threat in terms of heavy metal contamination. The researchers attribute this to factors such as dilution of contaminants by rainfall, low levels of heavy metals in the waste deposited at the landfill and low accumulation of the heavy metals over the landfill's 14-year history.

The team, however, pointed out the need for long-term monitoring of the underground water, soil and vegetation for heavy metals ■



University of Botswana Signs MoU with Techsol Training Services (PTY) Ltd

Underscores university-industry collaboration in fostering innovation and research



Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris and Techsol Training Services Managing Director, Mr Peter Bell, exchanging Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) documents after signing.

University of Botswana (UB) and Techsol Training Services (TechsolTS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the 30th of July 2025 at UB, to formalise their collaboration in key areas such as joint research projects, staff and student training, student attachments and seminar presentations.

Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, signed

on behalf of UB while Managing Director, Mr Peter Bell, signed for Techsol Training Services. TechsolTS is a 100 percent citizen owned, BQA registered education and training provider specialising in niche product-specific technical training.

It also delivers customised training programmes designed by industry experts and in collaboration with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) who are at the forefront of technology and maintain strong install bases with local market. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Professor Norris said university-industry collaboration was crucial for fostering innovation, improving research and enhancing education.

He noted that such collaborations also benefited both institutions and businesses by providing access to resources, expertise and real-world problem-solving opportunities, ultimately driving economic development and technological advancement.

The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Professor Edward Dintwa, said the partnership presented a valuable opportunity to expose students to cutting-edge tools, systems and industry practices across a range of technical fields.

He highlighted that the partnership would further enhance production of graduates that were market ready through interaction with expertise, project based learning and supervision by industry experts to enhance students' skills. Meanwhile, TechsolTS, Managing Director, Mr Peter Bell, expressed gratitude for partnering with UB in providing training to produce market ready graduates. He noted that TechsolTS collaborated with leading global manufacturers at the forefront of emerging technologies which could be customised to meet the demands of current and future markets particularly in the mining sector for the benefit of the nation ■



UB Executive Management Team (EMT) and Techsol Training Services delegation led by Mr Peter Bell at the MoU signing.

Gambling Authority, Debswana Push Digital Communication at UB Conference

Aims is to lead responsible growth while protecting youth and vulnerable populations

Communication is emerging as a powerful tool for governance and corporate transparency in Botswana, speakers said at the University of Botswana's (UB) 5th International Conference on Academic and Professional Communication this week.

Delivering the keynote address, Gambling Authority Chief Executive Officer, Mr Emolemo Peter Kesitilwe, underscored the role of communication as a key regulatory tool in Botswana's evolving gambling sector. He highlighted the Authority's strategic shift towards digital platforms including self-exclusion portals and national education campaigns designed to influence public behaviour and enhance stakeholder engagement.

"By leveraging strategic messaging and campaigns such as Motshameko o Phepha, and integrating emerging technologies such as AI-enabled monitoring, the Authority aims to lead responsible growth while protecting youth and vulnerable populations," he said. Mr Kesitilwe added that the Authority had sponsored 10 students and one staff member to attend the event as part of its human capital development efforts.

Debswana's Executive Head of Corporate Affairs, Ms Rachel Mothibatsela, echoed the importance of digital communication in modern business. She said the mining giant was using storytelling, social media platforms and provenance-tracking technologies to highlight its social impact and build stakeholder trust. "Digital tools allow us to trace each diamond



Gambling Authority Chief Executive Officer, Mr Emolemo Peter Kesitilwe

to the communities it benefits. This reinforces our social licence to operate and aligns us with the national development goals," she said. Ms. Mothibatsela emphasised the importance of data-driven communication in ensuring

that development efforts were measurable, meaningful and sustainable.

The conference, hosted by the University's Department of Communication and Study Skills, was held under the theme *"Shaping the Future: Trends and Approaches to Academic and Professional Communication in a Digital Era."* It brought together local and international scholars, students and professionals to explore emerging communication trends in a digitalising world.

Key topics included artificial intelligence in communication, ethical challenges online, crisis messaging and digital pedagogy.

The University of Botswana commended the sponsorship from the Gambling Authority and Debswana, saying it enabled wider participation and showcased valuable collaboration between academia and industry.

The event concluded with a bushfire dinner and networking excursion at Mokolodi Nature Reserve ■



Bushfire networking excursion at Mmokolodi Nature Reserve.



Assistant Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Hon Augustine Nyatanga, and his delegation during a courtesy visit to UB Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris and his Executive Management Team.

High-Achieving Dukwi Refugee Students to Receive Sponsorship

We have already begun engaging district councils countrywide to ensure that no deserving student is left behind – Prof Norris

The University of Botswana (UB) will offer scholarships to high-performing students from Dukwi Refugee Camp as part of its continued commitment to social responsibility and inclusive education.

The initiative was announced by Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris, during a courtesy visit by Assistant Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Hon. Augustine Nyatanga, at the University recently.

Hon. Nyatanga lauded government efforts to provide access to basic education in refugee camps such as Dukwi but lamented lack of

support structures for academically gifted students seeking tertiary education.

"Despite some refugee students achieving as high as 46 and 48 points in national examinations, many remain idle because of financial constraints," he said, citing data from as far back as 2022. He described the situation as a pressing concern that demanded urgent attention.

In his remarks, Professor Norris reaffirmed UB's commitment to supporting disadvantaged students, noting that the University already had a policy allowing admission of students from

marginalised backgrounds, even when they fell short of standard entry requirements.

"We do not apply cut-off points rigidly when it comes to disadvantaged students," said Professor Norris. "We are aware of the unique socio-economic and educational barriers these students face," he highlighted.

He further pointed to ongoing initiatives such as the SAN Research Project which mentored underprivileged students from undergraduate through to postgraduate levels, including master's degrees.

"These success stories prove the power of inclusive education to transform lives," he said. However, Professor Norris acknowledged challenges in identifying deserving students in remote areas and called for strengthened collaboration with social workers and district councils. These stakeholders, he said, were better placed to identify and refer potential candidates for university admission. "We have already begun engaging district councils countrywide to ensure that no deserving student was left behind due to lack of access or awareness," he added.

Beyond education access, the meeting also explored opportunities for collaboration between the University and the Ministry of Justice and Correctional Services particularly in the development of short courses and specialised training programmes for the justice sector personnel.

A shared emphasis was also placed on inmate rehabilitation. Both parties agreed on the need to equip incarcerated individuals with skills and education to enable their reintegration into society to reduce marginalisation post-release.

The courtesy visit marked a critical step towards broadening UB's social impact through educational equity and capacity building in national development sectors ■

ICAPC Celebrates Cultural Diversity with Lively Global Showcase

The Night served as a fitting reminder that expression transcends spoken word



Cultural night celebrating diversity and intercultural dialogue.



Professor Samuel Amponsah from the University of Ghana.

The Fifth International Conference on Academic and Professional Communication (ICAPC) took a lively turn with its much-anticipated Cultural Night, blending scholarly exchange with a dynamic celebration of global cultures.

Now in its fifth edition, the conference, held under the theme "Shaping the Future: Trends and Approaches to Academic and Professional Communication in a Digital Era," served as a vital platform for academics, researchers, educators and industry professionals from across Africa and beyond to engage on emerging trends and innovations driven by technological advancement and digital transformation.

Hosted at the University Library Auditorium from the 16th-18th July 2025, the conference offered more than just intellectual engagement. The Cultural Night, featured as part of the conference programme, brought delegates together in a colourful showcase of music,

dance, fashion and language - celebrating diversity and fostering intercultural dialogue in a truly memorable way.

With communication as the central theme of the conference, the Cultural Night served as a fitting reminder that expression transcends the spoken word. Performances from various countries lit up the stage with traditional dances, contemporary musical numbers, poetic recitations, and runway-style showcases of indigenous attire. The event was more than just a spectacle. It was an immersive journey into the cultural identities and narratives of the participants.

What began as entertainment evolved into an experience in cultural diplomacy. The diverse programme showcased not only African traditions - from Tswana dances to Nigerian drumming but also a variety of global contributions, highlighting how shared expressions can bridge academic and social boundaries.

In his address, one of the organisers remarked that such events played a critical role in promoting cultural intelligence and inclusivity within scholarly spaces. "The Cultural Night is not just a celebration, it's a conversation," he noted. "It opens our eyes to the many ways we communicate meaning, value and identity."

This year's edition placed special emphasis on African heritage, reflecting ICAPC's commitment to spotlighting local cultures within a global context. From rhythm-infused performances to rich storytelling through costume and movement, the evening underscored the idea that understanding and respect for cultural diversity were essential in any professional or academic environment.

As the night drew to a close, attendees left not only entertained but inspired, reminded that while language may structure communication, culture gave it life. In many ways, the cultural night encapsulated the spirit of ICAPC: a forum where knowledge met creativity and learning extends beyond the lecture hall ■

UB Judo Teams Shine at 2025 South African Championships

The prestigious tournament drew top-tier judo talent from across southern Africa

The University of Botswana (UB) Judo Club has once again showcased its growing strength in regional martial arts, earning a gold and a silver medal at the 2025 South African Open Judo Championships, held at the University of Pretoria, South Africa recently. The UB team, comprising 10 student athletes – seven (7) men and three (3) women – competed fiercely in the prestigious tournament which drew top-tier judo talent from across southern Africa including Angola, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia.

Thebe Lesole clinched Gold in a fiercely contested men's 57kg category while Lefika Molome brought home silver within the same weight class. Other team members also put up commendable performances across various male and female divisions including in the 60kg, 66kg, 73kg, -81kg, and +78kg categories.

Unfortunately, Ericson Motseonageng was unable to compete due to injury.

The team managed to complete more than 87 percent of its training programme prior to departure. The preparation focused mainly on psychological readiness in addition to technical and physical conditioning. According to Coach Gilberto Portuondo, only two (2) of the seven (7) competing students had prior experience at an event of this level.

"While the medal tally is numerically lower than last year's, the quality of the results has improved significantly, with a gold and silver indicating an upward trajectory in performance," noted Coach Portuondo. "Many of our athletes were first timers at a tournament of this level, yet their discipline, motivation and resilience were key to our success."

The team views the Pretoria championship as

a crucial milestone in its competitive calendar, serving as preparation for the final tournament of the year which UB is scheduled to host in December.

Coach Portuondo also acknowledged the indispensable support from the Department of Culture, Sports and Recreation. "Without their assistance, these achievements would not have been possible," he said.

Head of Delegation, Botshelo Taolo, expressed optimism about the team's future, citing the strong performance and positive attitude of the younger athletes. "We are confident that with continued support and exposure to more regional competitions, the UB Judo Club will keep raising the bar," she said.

The club now looks ahead with renewed confidence, eyeing greater success on home ground in the upcoming December tournament



UB Judo Teams displaying the medals (Gold and Silver) that they won at 2025 South African Championships.



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By 2029 the University will be a distinctive centre of academic excellence in Botswana, Africa and globally.

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