

QUALITY EXPERIENCE

for all students



THE CORE OF A VISION: The University of Mpumalanga provides an array of extra-curricula programmes and services that place the development of students at the centre of the university's mission

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THE University of Mpumalanga (UMP) places students at the core of its vision and mission. This implies exposing our students to quality learning and social experiences by the provision of a variety of student-centred services for the holistic development of our students.

We believe that a UMP student must be an independent thinker, socially conscious and, thus, be able to make a meaningful contribution to society.

It is in this light that the university is providing an array of extra-curricula programs and services ranging from student leadership and development, student housing and related services, sports and recreational services, health and welfare services to community engagement and support to promote civic participation among students.

The provision of student services is centred around the practice of living and learning which recognises that university students learn both in and out of the classroom.

Our modern residences are equipped with computer rooms, study rooms, Wi-Fi, games rooms, common rooms and visitors' lounges to promote our philosophy of living and learning.

Larry Mahlalela, a first-year student, when asked about his experience at the university, said: "I am happy about how things are conducted around the university, as there is safety, good accommodation and provision of academic equipment."

Angel Sibozwe, a third-year student based at the Siyabuswa Campus, observed that students understand that UMP is in its

developmental stage.

"Our experience as students at UMP is like constructing a road while driving on it. When we experience challenges, we need to fix them as we move along."

For students who prefer to live off-campus, we have accredited a number of accommodation providers to ensure that these facilities meet our standards, are safe and within a reasonable distance from the university.

To promote a vibrant student life, students are encouraged to join and participate in student societies such as the Choral Music Groups; Student Christian Organisations; Debating Societies; Cultural Societies; Living & Learning Communities; and others.

The wellness of students is also core to the services that are provided for the students at the university. Health and wellness education programmes are organised for the benefit of students.

Student Development Officers are responsible for the arrangements, facilitation and organising of development workshops for students.

These workshops are conducted, in some instances, by experienced student development practitioners from external service provider organisations.

Students are appreciative of the services that the university continues to provide to all students from first years to senior students.

"The University of Mpumalanga is doing things well because they take good care of us as first year students. I'm glad to be a student of UMP," said Zolani Ngcele.

In promoting the holistic development of its students, UMP has established cooperative ventures with the Universities of Limpopo, Venda and Tshwane

University of Technology (Polokwane, Mbombela and eMalahleni Campuses) towards the provision of sports, recreation and student support services among these institutions.

Amid the many services, we have agreed to host an annual sports tournament to allow our students to share their experiences, expose themselves to other environments but also create a competitive sports platform for the students.

The inaugural sports tournament is planned for the September recess this year and will be hosted by the University of Limpopo.

The tournament will cover sporting codes such as soccer, netball, volleyball, basketball, tennis, and chess.

It is important to note that although UMP is a new university, its students have a vibrant student life through participation in a number of sporting and recreational codes, such as soccer, netball, volleyball, squash, tennis, basketball, athletics, chess and aerobics.

The university has a policy on the recognition of excellent student achievements in co-curricular activities which, over and above the recognition of excellence in achievement, also promotes student participation in co-curricular activities.

The students will be awarded for their achievement in, among others, sports, arts and culture, student governance and development, and student housing.

The Vice-Chancellor Scholarship is another tool which promotes and recognises both leadership and academic excellence.

The partnership that the Vice-Chancellor has established with the

University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida, United States, includes an agreement on the sharing of experiences, information and services that seek to promote the support for student development in a number of areas such as student governance and leadership, student exchange programmes, civic engagement and the promotion of service learning.

The university has committed itself to create opportunities for students to participate in programmes that develop their potential in different areas towards leadership.

This is created, among others, through the promotion of student representatives as Faculty Reps, Tutors, Student Mentors, Floor Reps and House Committees in the residences, and Peer Helpers.

The Peer Helpers, for example, are trained by Higher Education HIV/Aids to support other students on student health matters such as healthy living, health campaigns and testing (HCT) and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) campaigns.

Thabiso Shongwe, the 2016 SRC President, is excited about development at the University: "The students of the University of Mpumalanga are gradually transitioning from a college culture to that of a university."

"The DHET has rendered an imperative service with the mandate given to our VC that no new students must be deprived of or rejected at university enrolment in 2016.

"As the SRC we are happy that our poor African brothers and sisters have a chance to achieve their dreams through our university: our financial needs are being dealt with in a rational manner.

"The programmes offered to

first-year students such as orientation, student life and culture lectures, residence and dining hall life, contribute a lot to the social wellbeing of our students and also as individual beings.

"A university should be both a place for learning as well as entertainment for us young people.

"We are proud that our university provides us with interactive spaces which also promote social cohesion which I consider a positive experience to students.

"I believe that the university environment provides necessary forces for student development and contribution to the society of our nation.

"Although one understands that students are always faced with social challenges and temptations, we are still aiming for a higher percentage of students graduating in our university."

As a new university with low student numbers, the opportunities for leadership and innovation are enormous. Students can be involved with the launch of new societies or sporting codes and become involved with club and society management.

The founding students of the University of Mpumalanga are in the enviable position of being able to create a university culture rather than to adapt to an existing one.

Innocentia Banda, a second-year student who is also a member of one of the student leadership formations, summed it up: "As a UMP student I feel that the way things are going at our university shows that UMP will soon become one of the best universities in the country."

Dr P Maminza is the Dean of Students at the University of Mpumalanga



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