

Matengu to put emphasis on academic research

■ Steven Klukowski

KEETMANSHOOP - "It is my vision to build a legacy of research, innovation and development at this institution," said professor Kenneth Matengu, the current vice-chancellor of the University of Namibia (Unam) during a stakeholders' engagement meeting held in Keetmanshoop recently.

Addressing the audience present, Matengu explained that a feasibility study initially carried out during 2010 prior to the establishment of the Unam Southern Campus in 2014 whereby Keetmanshoop was identified as the host town. "With its inception approximately 50 students were enrolled, but today the campus can boast an intake of close to 1 400 students," announced the Unam vice-chancellor.

He said the presence of Unam is visible in all parts of Namibia apart from Hardap and Kavango West.

Matengu further mentioned the institution's skilled workforce as one of its biggest strength which consist amongst others of more than 130 full professors and 600 PhD holders which can be



Professor Kenneth Matengu, the Unam vice-chancellor speaking during a stakeholder's engagement meeting recently held in Keetmanshoop.

Photo: Steven Klukowski

mainly attributed to a strong staff development policy. He further elaborated that students from 44 countries outside Namibia are currently studying at the institution.

In terms of opportunities, he said Unam is operating on a competitive base in order to remain on top of the latest trends in the education industry. In addition, the institution has enabling legislation being put in place in order to allow for business ventures, he mentioned as another opportunity.

He furthermore, explained government grants and third income (foreign) streams are mainly contributing towards the financial stability of the university.

"In addition, Unam owns four farms through its mother company Inceptus Holdings, which can be utilized except from training in business areas, he added. Matengu elaborated further that they are busy

entering into Public Private Partnerships with stakeholders in order to provide adequate accommodation for their students.

"The external and international relations we had with more than 200 universities are providing ample opportunities for our students and staff to engage in exchange programmes," he explained.

The vice-chancellor further made specific reference to the more than 40 000 Unam alumni's who, apart from contributing financially to the institution also provides advice to it on ways on how to further improve.

Mentioning geoscience as one of the main research focus areas, Matengu explained that the aim of it is to change the dry areas in the south of Namibia into a crop-production area. He then gave the example of Israel as a desert country that produce crops by making use of underground water. The vice-chancellor in addition mentioned the Namibia BioBank programme as another research focus area.

According to him, the institution intended to produce personalised medicine catered for a specific community based on their DNA genetics.

"Unam has done a lot of research in the area of malaria whereby two medicinal teas were produced which works just as good as the medicinal products available in pharmacies," stressed Matengu.

In conclusion, he explained that research is currently being carried out to prove that certain mushrooms can have a stimulating effect on the immune systems of HIV-infected people.