

UNIMA Bulletin



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Beautiful Cacophony

On a normal day, the noise one would hear on campus would be the beautiful singing of the birds, usually punctuated by the rather disturbing perpetual honking and engine hums of *kabaza* motorcycles and taxis. Occasionally, the rumbling boots of soldiers or policemen who use the campus as their route for jogging would also be heard, together with their distinctive 'jogging songs'. Behind the Great Hall you may encounter some singing or acting rehearsals, sometimes interspersed with the faint note of a piano or guitar escaping from within the depths of the Little Theatre. Or maybe the sound of shuffling feet that comes at hourly intervals in the corridors and the accompanying chatter as students move from one class to the other.

That would be what we may call the 'normal' ambience of our beautiful campus, the soundtrack amidst which brains are sharpened, knowledge is exchanged, innovative ideas are born, and futures are shaped. But once in a while, this campus experiences a different kind of normal that shakes the core of the relative 'quiet' we are used to.

Like rain, it starts slowly, with the distant rumbling of thunder. A flower vendor setting up shop in the thick of the night, a photographer unfurling his equipment. A flash here, a flash there. Graduands flaunting their gowns around campus. Then, like a strong tsunami wave, it all culminates into fully fledged chaos.

People from all walks of life pour in like a flood in all sorts of vehicles or on foot.

With them, they bring the ear-splitting noise of *vuvuzelas*, competing with the honks of the vehicles. A full measure of the drum beat and the sound of a hoe that creates what is called *mganda*. Traffic jams. More beeping. More revving engines. Ululation. More *mganda*. A soul-piercing whistle. Another blaring *vuvuzela*. When it all comes together, the noise is palpable, you can almost feel it on your skin. It is absolute chaos. Total cacophony. But it is beautiful chaos. Beautiful cacophony. Maybe a magnification of the noise under which these great brains are baked.

These are the days that stir excitement across the entire university community. Lecturers, students, and administrators alike look forward to them with anticipation. They are rewarding moments that celebrate the student's academic achievement and the lecturer's successful transfer of knowledge. For the university as a whole, these days are a source of pride for they provide visible proof of its meaningful contribution to the realisation of Malawi2063 through the training of skilled human capital.

We ended the month of April and started May in the middle of all this magnificent cacophony we all look forward to. In the first 2025 congregation, which took place on Wednesday 30th April and Thursday 1st May 2025, over 2600 students graduated into the body of alumni of this prestigious university. The synchronised discordance that parents, guardians, friends and relatives bring undoubtedly adds colour to the celebration of the culmination of the four to five years of intellectual gymnastics

endured by the student who, on this day, is called a graduand for a short while and then a graduate forever.

As a top university, we are always proud to release top class graduates into the industry because we know we have created the next crop of leaders, innovators and change makers that this country needs. As the Chancellor of the University of Malawi, President Dr Lazarus Chakwera, once said, "A graduate of the University of Malawi *si munthu wamba*".

It surely is a tiring day for the organisers, but at the end of it all, we are always happy this day happened.

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The President of the Republic of Malawi and Chancellor of UNIMA, Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, presiding over the congregation.

A Celebration of Academic Excellence: UNIMA Graduation 2025

Annually, the University of Malawi celebrates the achievements of women and men who completed their studies at the institution as well as at other universities that were formerly under the federal university system. This year, the University recognized these men and women during a graduation ceremony held in the Great Hall. The ceremony took place on 30th April and 1st May 2025, and was divided into four sessions. The first session of the congregation was presided over by the President of the Republic of Malawi and Chancellor of the University, Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera.

During the ceremony, both the Chancellor, Dr. Chakwera, and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu, congratulated the graduates on their well-earned certificates. Dr. Chakwera highlighted several accomplishments of his administration, aimed at increasing access to education, such as the expansion of enrolment from 30,000 to 75,000 students and the establishment of a Ministry of Higher Education, among others.

In his remarks, Prof. Sajidu expressed gratitude to the Government for its continued support to the University and the education sector at large, noting that such commitment to higher education remains the cornerstone of national development. He also mentioned

ongoing infrastructural developments at UNIMA, including the near completion of prefabricated classrooms under the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) and the commencement of the construction of a Teaching and Learning Complex under the SAVE project. He stated that these advancements reaffirm the University's unwavering commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and global engagement.

The Chairperson of UNIMA Council, Dr. Christopher Guta, also appreciated the Government for its continued support toward the University's growth. "There are many projects which are being supported by the Government through various financing arrangements, most notably the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP)," he said. He further urged the

graduates to uphold moral character and integrity as they transition into the wider and highly competitive world of work.

Students beamed in their academic gowns as they walked to the front upon hearing their names called. One of the graduates, Mr. Pachalo Luhanga, a Master of Science in Food Science graduate who completed his studies with distinction, shared his postgraduate experience. He described the journey as very rewarding, highlighting the strong bonds he formed with fellow students and faculty members, as well as the numerous networking and professional development opportunities the programme offered. He encouraged prospective postgraduate students interested in studying at the University of Malawi to keep an open mind and be willing to explore new ideas and perspectives.



A graduand beams with pride as his name is read aloud during the ceremony.



The VC and DVC congratulate Ms Lucy Dickman, one of the recipients of the Vice-Chancellor's Award.

Vice-Chancellor Awards UNIMA's Top Students

The University of Malawi does not only promote excellence among its students, but also rewards those who display such brilliance during their stay at the institution. It is for this reason that the Great Hall was filled with excitement on 7th March 2025, as Vice-Chancellor Professor Samson Sajidu conferred various prestigious awards on 163 students in recognition of their outstanding performance. The award categories included the Dean's List Award, the Vice-Chancellor's Award, and the Vice-Chancellor's Extraordinary Student Award.

A total of 162 students received the Dean's List Award for achieving a GPA of 3.75 and above, with no module below 70%. Among them, 11 students also qualified for the Vice-Chancellor's Award for attaining a minimum GPA of 3.9.

The most anticipated moment of the evening was the presentation of the Vice-Chancellor's Extraordinary Student Award, which was given to Mr. Amidu Ibrahim, a fourth-year Humanities student. Mr. Ibrahim, also known as Amidu Ellan, is one of Malawi's well-known rising musicians, renowned for his hit song "Lira koma Uziyenda," which

resonates with many, including students.

This award is presented to students who demonstrate outstanding contributions beyond academics, carrying UNIMA's name with pride and making a significant impact on the student community and the nation as a whole. Since its introduction three years ago, only two students have received this award.

Also present at the event was Mr. Bernard Kaluzi, representing Old Mutual, which partnered with the university for the ceremony. Mr. Chiluzi, a Finance Education Manager, delivered a presentation on money management, encouraging students to venture into business early and equipping them with the knowledge needed to build financial stability and independence. Old Mutual also pledged to continue supporting the initiative, reinforcing its commitment to empowering students.

One of the awardees, Mr. Emmanuel Julio Beyamu, a second-year Actuarial Science student, stated that his motivation to work hard and attain a high GPA stems from his desire and goal to graduate with distinction.

"I am very focused and goal-oriented,"

he said. "At university, there are a lot of distractions, so avoiding them helps me maintain my performance. In my first year, I was on the Vice-Chancellor's List, and this year, being on the Deans' List proves the consistency these small actions are yielding."

All the students received certificates signed by the Vice-Chancellor. Students who qualified for the Vice-Chancellor's Award each received MK1,000,000 to support their studies, and, in addition, Old Mutual contributed MK150,000 to each student.



Mr Amidu Ellan performing during the function.



Chairperson of UNIMA Council, Dr Christopher Guta, officially launching the construction site.

UNIMA Launches Construction of New Teaching Complex

On 16th April 2025, the University of Malawi held a ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a teaching complex under the Skills for a Vibrant Economy (SAVE) Project. The project is funded by the Malawi Government with support from the World Bank. The construction of the teaching complex is expected to be completed in May 2026 and will feature classrooms with a total capacity to accommodate 1,600 students.

The ceremony was graced by the Chairperson of the UNIMA Council, Dr. Christopher Guta, and attended by the University Registrar, Mr. Martin Matululu; Assistant Registrar (Administration), Mr. Kumvenji Lamba; the Director of Students' Affairs, Dr. Jonas Mwatseteza; other UNIMA staff members; representatives of the current and former students' council; as well as officials from PLEM Construction Ltd and AWW Ltd

During the ceremony, Dr. Guta expressed his excitement about the construction of the teaching complex, noting that it aligns with the university's strategic

plan, particularly its objective of internationalisation. He further stated that the new infrastructure will enhance the beauty of the campus, thereby increasing the university's attractiveness to both local and international students. Additionally, he highlighted that the new classrooms will accommodate more students, thereby increasing access to education. He concluded by commending the contractors

for the quality of work they have already demonstrated through the construction of the new administration block, which is also nearing completion.

The ceremony was held at the site behind the Brown Chipphamba Laboratories and officially marked the start of the construction project by PLEM Construction.



Project Manager, Thuambe Jama Osman, explaining the vision of the project.



Mr Daud Suleman delivering his talk.

Law, Technology, and Digital Rights: MACRA's Public Lecture at UNIMA

Students at the University of Malawi often interact with various specialists working in different fields through public lectures, which are regularly held on campus. On 21 March 2025, the University of Malawi hosted the Director General of the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), Mr. Daud Suleman, who delivered a public lecture titled Open Discussion on Digital Rights: The Law, The Technology, and the Myths. The lecture covered various topics, including an exploration of the landscape of digital rights in Malawi and an analysis of the realities and myths of the digital age.

The discussion, held at the Great Hall, attracted many students pursuing various programmes, as well as staff members from the university. Speaking on behalf of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the representative, Dr. Kondwani Munthali, expressed gratitude to the officials from MACRA for their visit. He stated that the lecture marked an important milestone in understanding the intersection of technology, law, and human rights in the digital age.

He further stated that the lecture was timely, as UNIMA proudly carries the

title of the home of academic freedom. In such a space, there is a need to ensure that digital rights are upheld. He urged students to engage actively with ideas and concepts and to further discuss and debate them openly.

In his remarks, Mr. Suleman stated that stakeholders vary across different sectors, and academia is a critical stakeholder. He emphasized the importance of continuously engaging academia to stimulate the necessary defences required to shape a digital Malawi that is legal and supported by balanced regulatory frameworks. He noted that the increasing use of the internet has also opened doors to cyber threats. He further stated that as the world becomes more digitalized, laws must adapt accordingly. The goal, he emphasized, is to ensure a safe digital space, and MACRA is implementing regulatory tools to achieve this for everyone. He also mentioned the need to enhance digital literacy and cybersecurity awareness, specifically targeting the younger generation, and to increase efforts to provide students in rural areas with access to technology and gadgets so that they can acquire the necessary knowledge.

Students expressed their gratitude to Mr. Suleman for the insightful lecture. Ms. Lilian Chawinga, a fourth-year Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Cultural Studies student, stated that she found the lecture insightful as it highlighted the intersection of law, technology, and digital rights.

"I particularly appreciated the emphasis on the need for Malawi to update its existing laws, most of which were enacted in 2016 and are insufficient for addressing emerging cyber threats," she said.

"As a Communications student taking the Media, Democracy, and Development course, I am convinced that establishing robust cybercrime and electronic evidence laws will enhance the legal framework, strengthening the enforcement capabilities of our regulatory and law enforcement bodies. This will help bring order to the digital space and ensure the effective protection of digital rights."

The lecture was interactive, featuring a question-and-answer session where students freely asked various questions to the MACRA officials, who provided answers that offered additional insights.



Hon. Vitumbiko Mumba delivering his lecture.

UNIMA Hosts Hon. Vitumbiko Mumba's 'People Over Politics' Lecture

On 11th April, 2025, the University of Malawi became the centre for nationwide attention as it hosted the most anticipated public lecture, titled "People Over Politics: A Bold, Righteous, and Inextinguishable Idea," delivered by Hon. Vitumbiko Mumba. This event, which took place in the Great Hall, was arranged in collaboration with the Public Administration Students (PAS) Society at UNIMA, highlighting the active role of students in fostering meaningful national discourse. The event featured the Minister of Trade and Industry, Honourable Engineer Vitumbiko Mumba, alongside South African political activist Dr. Mbuyiseni Ndlozi as the guest speaker. The event was filled with an enthusiastic diverse audience, including students from UNIMA and other neighbouring institutions of higher learning, as well as local chiefs, government officials, and UNIMA personnel. From UNIMA, officials included the Deputy Vice Chancellor Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise, the Registrar Mr. Martin Matululu, and Executive Dean Professor Happy Kayuni.

In his address, Hon. Mumba raised concerns about Malawi's political landscape, where party interests often take precedence over the well-being of the citizens. He emphasized that the concept of

people over politics, which is not a relatively new concept, is crucial if the country is to experience genuine development. He also attributed the country's slow development progress, despite its rich resources, to political interference. Hon. Mumba urged Malawians, especially the youth, to embrace governance focused on the people rather than partisan agendas.

Dr. Ndlozi delivered an inspiring message calling on African youth to resist manipulation by political and religious leaders. He emphasized unity, integrity, and accountability as vital for building a prosperous and just future across the

continent. His powerful speech deeply resonated with attendees, encouraging critical reflection on their role in shaping Africa's path forward.

Many Malawians and beyond were able to follow the lecture as it was broadcast live on major media outlets, thereby extending its reach beyond the UNIMA campus, sparking national widespread conversations about leadership, governance, and youth participation in Malawi. The role of UNIMA in hosting the event underscored its commitment to fostering dialogue that addresses pressing societal issues and inspires future leaders.



Hon. Mumba alongside Dr. Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, who also gave a spirited talk.



Dr Halima Twabi, recipient of the OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Award.

Dr. Twabi: First Malawian to Receive OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Award

The University of Malawi continues to shine and excel, as its students and staff members are consistently recognized and awarded by various international and local institutions. Recently, on 3rd March 2025, a University of Malawi staff member, Dr. Halima Twabi, was announced as one of the five exceptional female researchers awarded the 2025 OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Award for Early-Career Women Scientists in the Developing World for their contributions to research in inclusive health, advancing UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being.

Since its inception in 2013, Dr. Halima Twabi has become the first Malawian to receive this award. The OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Award has recognized the groundbreaking work of 69 women scientists from over 30 Global South countries. These awards are one way the OWSD-Elsevier Foundation celebrates the

incredible women scientists leading health research in regions that need it most. Apart from Malawi, other winners of the 2025 award have also been selected from Syria, Nepal, Palestine, and Guatemala.

“The award is very important to me as it is giving me a chance to share my research work and its impact on a global platform. Beyond personal recognition, it represents an opportunity to inspire and empower other women scientists,” she said. “It also puts the University of Malawi on the map and testifies to the excellence of the research work that is produced at UNIMA.”

The award includes a cash prize of USD 5,000 for each winner, along with a travel grant to attend a relevant conference in their field, providing essential networking opportunities. Through these awards, the foundation aims to inspire the next generation of women scientists and underscore the critical need for innovative changemakers to advance health research for sustainable development.

Dr. Halima Twabi is a Malawian biostatistician using advanced statistical methods to study health disparities among vulnerable populations. Her research addresses maternal HIV effects, childhood overweight and other health issues in disadvantaged communities. Her research has also utilized innovative statistical methods to investigate the influence of unhealthy food consumption on childhood overweight, a growing challenge in sub-Saharan Africa. Recognized with prestigious awards, including the 2020 L'Oréal-UNESCO Young Talent Award for Sub-Saharan Africa, Dr. Twabi is involved in initiatives to strengthen women's research capacity and serves in leadership roles with various scientific organizations. She is also the Malawi country lead of the ‘Strengthening Women's Research Network and Capacity to Address Women's Health in Sub-Saharan Africa’ project, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Grand Challenges.

Dr. Mweso Secures \$67,000 Ramboll Foundation Award



Dr. Ngcimezile Mweso

With the University of Malawi recognised as one of the region's top universities, it is no surprise that our esteemed academic members continue to receive recognition on both the international and local stages. Just a few weeks after two of our outstanding female academics

were honoured with prestigious awards in the form of the WSD-Elsevier Foundation Award and the Professor Ngeyi Ruth Kanyongolo Legacy Award, Dr. Ngcimezile Mweso, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Public Law and Clinical Legal Education, has earned the prestigious Ramboll Foundation Award. This annual research award, valued at USD67,000, is a significant accomplishment and further solidifies UNIMA's standing as a centre of excellence in academic research.

The Ramboll Foundation Award recognizes young scientists whose work demonstrates extraordinary contributions to sustainable research. The 2024 award topic focused on environmental justice, and researchers specializing in this area were invited to submit their work. Dr. Mweso's research stood out due to its deep integration of social equity within climate action frameworks.

Dr. Mweso's ongoing research specifically focuses on the justice implications of climate

action, with a particular emphasis on forest-based carbon sequestration projects. Her work aims to ensure these projects are both equitable and inclusive, especially for women and marginalized groups who often bear the brunt of the adverse effects of climate change. Her innovative approach to integrating social equity and environmental sustainability showcases the transformative potential of her work. The award prize will fund her research on the topic "Gender intersectionality and environmental justice for women in carbon sequestration projects in Malawi".

The recognition opens doors for Dr. Mweso to collaborate with top-tier researchers, institutions, and industry partners, which in turn strengthens UNIMA's global research network. UNIMA continues to foster an environment where ground-breaking research flourishes, further establishing its place as a hub for innovation and social change.

UNIMA Lecturer Secures Max Planck Research Grant

Lecturers from various departments at the University of Malawi continue to receive prestigious awards in recognition of the excellence they demonstrate in their research. Notably, Dr. Benson Malinga John, a lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Population Studies, has been awarded a €100,000 grant by the Max Planck Society to establish a Max Planck Partner Group at the University of Malawi. This initiative aims to foster collaborative research between the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPIDR) in Germany and the University of Malawi, with a focus on Family Research and Population Analysis for Development (FRePAD). This marks the first time an African institution has hosted an MPIDR partner group, representing a significant milestone in demographic research on the continent.

The Max Planck Society (Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, MPG) is one of the world's leading scientific research organizations, based in Germany. Founded in 1948 as the successor to

the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, it is named after physicist Max Planck, who developed the theory of quantum mechanics. The society conducts fundamental research in the natural sciences, life sciences, social sciences, and humanities, collaborating closely with universities, research centers, and industries worldwide. It operates over 80 Max Planck Institutes (MPIs) across Germany and internationally, each focusing on specialized fields.

"I was selected for this grant in recognition of my exemplary scientific work, which has already garnered international recognition," Dr. John stated. His research has been published in highly prestigious demography journals, including *Demography*, *Population Studies*, *Population and Development Review*, and *Population Research and Policy Review*. He will continue on this successful path as Head of the Max Planck Partner Group.

He believes that the grant will foster collaborative research between MPIDR and the University of Malawi. Furthermore, it will strengthen the capacity for



Dr. Benson Malinga John

demographic research within the department.

Dr. Benson Malinga John is also an editorial board member of the prestigious *Population Research and Policy Review* journal and a committee member of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population's Panel on COVID-19, Fertility, and Family.

UNIMA's Scholarship Excellence: Prof. Tembo Wins Hogan Prize



Professor Nick Tembo

If anyone ever seeks proof for University of Malawi's claim to connect with excellence, one area that may be highlighted is the fact that the institution's faculty comprises many award-winning academics. One of these is Professor Nick Mдика Tembo of the Department of Literary Studies, who has been selected as the eighth recipient of The Hogan Prize, awarded annually by a/b: Auto/Biography Studies for an

outstanding essay published in the journal. The prize was named in honour of two of the journal's founding editors, Rebecca and Joseph Hogan, who worked tirelessly and creatively to expand the field of auto/biography studies. This award recognizes ingenuity in scholarly research and supports critical work that advances the field of life writing. The prize includes an award of \$750. This award is generously supported by Routledge Journals.

Tembo's winning essay, "Confronting Apartheid's Revenants: Trevor Noah's Born a Crime and/as Traumedy," was published in a/b: Auto/Biography Studies' special issue on Comic Lives. In her remark for nominating the essay, guest judge Prof. Kari Winter noted how Tembo's work is richly informed by theories of trauma and life writing. "Tembo contributes powerful new insights into how humour can infuse hope into desperate situations," she said. Prof. Winter was particularly impressed by how the author brilliantly shows how Noah survives his traumatic childhood by simultaneously leaving unspeakable things unspoken and developing exceptional fluency in multiple languages and social codes. For Winter, Tembo's analysis reveals how Noah's comedic "testimony of pain" unveils the quotidian horrors and intrusive

revenants of apartheid while offering the possibility of healing and pleasure through the laughter he shares with his readers.

"I feel so humbled that one of the leading journals in life writing studies has decided to recognise my contribution to the field. I don't take the award for granted," Tembo said.

He believes that scholarship on life writing is deeply connected to trauma and memory studies—his area of specialisation—because both fields explore how personal experiences, especially those of suffering and survival, are represented, remembered, and processed over time. Life writing—whether in the form of memoirs, autobiographies, diaries, letters, or even biographical works—often serves as a space where individuals reflect on their pasts, including traumatic events, and attempt to make sense of those experiences.

Tembo's edited collection, *Trauma in the Age of Social Media: Narrative and Representation*, will be published by Palgrave Macmillan this year. He is currently at work on another book tentatively titled *Digital Trauma: Virality, Technology, and Mental Health in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

Dr. Malunga Joins WLA Board, Receives Legacy Award

As the world celebrates women this month for their remarkable achievements and inspiration, the University of Malawi continues to honour women who are being recognized in various spheres. Recently, on 7th March 2025, during the Annual General Meeting of the Women Lawyers Association in Lilongwe, Dr. Bernadette Malunga, Head of Private Law Department at UNIMA, was elected as a member of the association's Board of Directors.

During the AGM, the Women Lawyers Association established an award in honour of the Late Professor Ngeyi Kanyongolo, who once served as Associate Professor of Law at UNIMA, before being appointed as Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University of

Malawi. The award is aimed at recognizing and celebrating female lawyers who are advancing women's rights in the country. Dr. Malunga had the honour of being the first recipient of the award. She expressed her gratitude, and highlighted, as one of the reasons, the fact that the recognition affirms the impact of her work and serves as motivation to continue advocating for women's rights and gender equality.

"This award is a bittersweet acknowledgment of the kind of person late Prof. Ngeyi Kanyongolo was, and the legacy award will keep her memory and work alive," she remarked. She concluded by expressing her deep appreciation for the Women Lawyers Association, emphasizing that serving on its board is one way she contributes to the organisation's growth.



Dr. Bernadette Malunga

Dr. Malunga was voted into the association for her outstanding contribution as a women's rights activist, including representing the association in court cases.



Kate Aspray engaging with students at UNIMA.

Department of Sociology and Population Studies Hosts UK-Based Social Worker

The Department of Sociology and Population Studies recently hosted a UK-based visiting social worker, Kate Aspray, who is part of a UK charity called Supporting Social Work in Malawi (SSWIM). SSWIM has been supporting social work in Malawi by donating books to the department and providing assistance to Practice Educators (PEs). Aspray also works as a children's social worker and as a Social Work Development Manager at the local council in Newcastle, England.

The aim of her visit was to understand the focus of social work in Malawi and explore potential areas of collaboration. During her three-day stay at UNIMA from 17th to 19th March 2025, she interacted with the Executive Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, met members of the department, and participated in International Social Work Day activities led by the Social Work Society. She also presented at a staff-student seminar organized by the department. During the seminar, she discussed child protection issues in the UK, comparing them to the Malawian context, and concluded with a discussion on children's mental health.

In his remarks, the Executive Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Emmanuel Ngwira, welcomed Aspray to the school and commended her for exploring potential collaborations with the Department of Sociology and Population Studies, noting that such partnerships could extend to the entire School of Humanities and Social Sciences. The Head of the Department, Dr. Jesman Chintsanya, also expressed gratitude for her interest in

working with the department and students.

The Social Work Program Coordinator, Mr. Austin Ndala, who facilitated Aspray's visit to the University of Malawi, described her visit as fruitful. "We need to constantly learn from each other about how different countries are addressing challenges in the social work profession. Students have also been exposed to practical social work issues beyond Malawi," he said.



Executive Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences officially welcomes Kate Aspray.



Oxfam staff, UNIMA staff, the Mayor for Zomba City, students and other officials at the weather station.

Oxfam Officially Hands Over Weather Station Equipment to UNIMA

Just weeks after the Department of Geography, Earth Sciences and Environment at the University of Malawi received new weather monitoring equipment, representatives from Oxfam visited the department to officially hand over the tools. The newly installed equipment is expected to significantly enhance the department's ability to collect and monitor weather data.

Oxfam is working in collaboration with Zomba City Council, the Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD), and the Department of Geography, Earth

Sciences and Environment at UNIMA to implement various urban climate resilience interventions. These include the establishment of a city-wide early warning system for floods.

The weather station is equipped to measure a range of atmospheric parameters including wind speed, wind direction, barometric pressure, solar radiation, temperature, rainfall, and more. With this new digital system, the department will transition from its previous analogy setup to a more efficient and automated data collection process.

Speaking during the handover ceremony at the university's on-campus weather station, the Head of the Geography, Earth Sciences and Environment Department, Dr Miriam Joshua, emphasized the importance of the upgrade. She noted that the digital system would address challenges previously experienced with the analogy system, such as data gaps caused by the absence of monitoring personnel. The new setup allows for continuous automatic data capture, with real-time updates to be displayed on a screen that will be mounted at the Porter's Lodge, making weather information easily accessible to the wider UNIMA community.

Oxfam Malawi's Country Director, Mrs. Lingalireni Mihowa, highlighted the project's significance for Zomba's resilience. She described the project as timely, especially in light of the recent increase in cyclone activity in Malawi.

"When the project was being conceptualized back in 2018, we had no idea that cyclones would become such a pressing issue. But it has turned out to be one of the most relevant and appropriate projects considering the current situation," she said.



A close up of the Weather Station.



The UNIMA Deputy Vice-Chancellor engages with participants at the workshop.

Tiny Machines, Big Impact: AI for Sustainable Development

As experts from around the world focus on programming small machines to address global issues such as hunger, climate change, and other environmental challenges, the University of Malawi has not been left behind. Through its School of Natural and Applied Sciences, the university has launched a five-day training workshop this week on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in small devices. The workshop, titled “TinyML for Sustainable Development,” focuses on innovative technology that enables machine learning models to run on low-cost, low-power microcontrollers. Organized in collaboration with the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), the workshop has attracted participants from UNIMA and other universities across Southern Africa.

The workshop is sponsored by various global organizations and companies, including RAiDO, ICTP, NAIxus, UNESCO’s IRC-AI, Edge-AI, ITU’s AI-4-Good, CRAFS, and the Ministry of Education. It is being held at the New Economics Building, where 30 students will receive training from international

experts on how to use AI to address the country’s critical issues. The workshop will cover areas such as agriculture, health, and the environment.

The opening ceremony, which took place on 31st March, 2025 at the Wadonda Lecture Theatre, was attended by notable figures, including Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise, the Deputy Vice Chancellor of UNIMA; Dr. John Shawe-Taylor, Director of the International Research Center on Artificial Intelligence (IRC-AI); and Dr. Levis Eneya, Secretary for Higher Education.

At the event, Dr. Madise highlighted the importance of understanding AI for national development, emphasizing that the workshop provides a valuable opportunity for participants to learn how to programme small machines that can help solve the country’s challenges, including addressing environmental issues through weather prediction.

“One of the key pillars of the university is human development. We need to ensure that we have Malawians who possess the tools and skills necessary to drive the

country forward. We cannot reach the 2063 goals if we don’t have people who are educated in AI and can harness its potential,” he said.

He further explained that AI is typically associated with high-end gadgets and energy-intensive systems. As such, in countries like Malawi, where there is already a power deficit, it is crucial to develop solutions that rely on small, energy-efficient machines.

As the world continues to explore ways of using technology to drive development, UNIMA, as a centre of excellence, is dedicated to fostering innovations and equipping its students with the skills and knowledge needed to address current and future challenges. Through initiatives like the TinyML workshop, the university aims to empower students to use advanced technologies, such as AI, to tackle critical issues. This commitment underscores the university’s role in shaping a brighter and more sustainable future for the nation and beyond.



Young legal scholars engaged in discussion.

Law Students Gain Insights on Cross-Border Dispute Resolution

The School of Law, Economics, and Government's Private Law Department hosted an international guest, Mr. Hendrik Puschmann, Partner and Co-Head of International Arbitration at Trowers & Hamlin, who delivered a presentation titled Cross-Border Commercial Disputes. The seminar, held at the Law Boardroom on 24th March 2025, was attended by staff members and students from the department, as well as the UNIMA Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise.

The Head of the Private Law Department, Dr. Bernadette Malunga, welcomed and expressed appreciation for Mr. Puschmann's visit. Mr. Puschmann's presentation covered various topics, with a particular focus on arbitration. He provided an in-depth explanation of its meaning, addressed common myths surrounding arbitration, and outlined the reasons why parties opt for this dispute resolution mechanism. The seminar offered valuable insights into the importance of distinguishing between key arbitration concepts, such as enforcement and enforceability. Additionally, it introduced fundamental principles like Kompetenz-Kompetenz and highlighted the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application in legal practice.

The event included a question-and-answer session, making it more interactive. Ms.

Lusayo Mulaga, a third-year law student, described the lecture as a valuable refresher on alternative dispute resolution. "The insights into arbitration included the importance of balancing party autonomy with fairness in the procedure, considering cultural and linguistic differences, and recognising technological advancements that now allow arbitration to be conducted online," she said. "Additionally, the seminar explored the intersection of national courts and international arbitration, investor-state arbitration, and the necessity for arbitrators to uphold ethical standards to ensure a fair, efficient, and effective arbitration process."

She further noted that while prior knowledge from courses such as Conflict of Laws is essential, it must be complemented by an understanding of arbitration in practice. This approach, she emphasized, would enable students to navigate alternative dispute resolution routes more effectively and apply theoretical concepts in a practical manner.

The speaker's expertise and real-world experience provided valuable insights into the differences between theoretical foundations and practical realities in arbitration.



Mr Hendrick Puschmann making his presentation.



Mr Sunge Kalumo, Committee Clerk at Parliament, making a presentation.

UNIMA Students Engage Parliament for Governance Insights

In a bid to deepen understanding of the legislative process, the University of Malawi Students Association Parliament and the Student Representative Council (SRC), on 11th April 2025, embarked on an educational trip to the Parliament of Malawi in Lilongwe. The visit aimed to provide students with hands-on experience of parliamentary procedures and processes, fostering informed and engaged citizenship among the student body.

During the session, students interacted with various Members of Parliament, including the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Catherine Gotani Hara. The legislators delivered a series of presentations to the students. Among the topics covered were how bills are documented in business committees before being tabled in the parliamentary chamber, the roles and functions of the business committee, the passing of the national budget, the development of

government policies, the legislative process for passing and amending bills, and several other aspects of parliamentary governance.

In his remarks, Joel Chigaru, the Speaker of the UNIMASA Parliament at the University of Malawi, described the visit as a valuable opportunity to foster understanding of the functions of Parliament. He further explained that the trip was designed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical governance, while equipping students with essential skills in governance and leadership. “By interacting with Members of Parliament and observing the legislative process first-hand, students gained valuable insights into the role of Parliament in shaping the country’s laws and policies,” he said.

This visit marks a significant milestone in promoting UNIMA students’ development and leadership.

CONTRIBUTOR:
Timothy Hassam, 3rd
year, Bachelor of Arts in
Communication and Cultural
Studies



UNIMA students pose with the Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Catherine Gotani Hara.



BACCS students engaging with Mibawa Television personnel.

BACCS Society Engages Mibawa Television in Interactive Media Sessions

Various student societies at the University of Malawi have the opportunity to interact with experts from different industries. The institution's Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Cultural Studies Society (BACCS Society) recently hosted the Mibawa Television team on 14th March 2025, where students actively participated in various Mibawa Television programmes, including Youth and Politics, Siza Aliyese, Kanzunguzeni, and others.

The sessions took place in the Audio-Visual Room and various locations across campus. Selina Dumbula, the renowned host of Kanzunguzeni on Mibawa Television, praised the students' energy and enthusiasm during the sessions. "We had high expectations when we arrived, and the students exceeded them. The energy has inspired and motivated us to plan another visit in the future," she said.

Joseph Nkhata Junior, a third-year student who participated in Kanzunguzeni and Siza Aliyese, expressed his gratitude for the interaction and the practical lessons he gained from the Mibawa TV experts. "Mibawa Television's visit has motivated and inspired me to pursue opportunities on their platform. Interacting with their team has also broadened my understanding of professional television production, camera

projection, and interviewing techniques," he said.

In his remarks, the president of BACCS Society, Mr. Lonjezo Kadetseka, commended Mibawa TV for their visit and the practical lessons they delivered to students. "As communication students, we appreciate Mibawa Television's presence and the opportunity to participate in their programmes," he said. "Our interactions with the Mibawa team have enhanced our knowledge of television production, news writing, and news reporting, which will greatly benefit our future careers."

The successful collaboration between BACCS Society and Mibawa Television is a testament to the society's commitment to fostering excellence in communication studies, providing students with valuable opportunities for growth, and bridging the gap between academia and industry.

CONTRIBUTOR:

Timothy Hassam, 3rd year, Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Cultural Studies



Recording of a television programme in session.



Handing over of the saplings.

UNIMAWES Hands Over 100 Tree Seedlings to Mulunguzi Secondary School

As part of its commitment to keeping Zomba clean and green, the University of Malawi Wildlife and Environment Society (UNIMAWES) continues to plant trees in various locations across Zomba City.

Most recently, on March 5, 2025, the society, together with its patron, Mr. Vitumbiko Chijere-Chirwa, visited Mulunguzi Secondary School, where they handed over 100 pine tree seedlings to the school's Wildlife and Environment Club.

The handover ceremony began with a presentation by Mr. Chijere-Chirwa, who emphasized the importance of students taking care of their surroundings, including the proper disposal of waste—especially thin plastics. The session was interactive, allowing both groups to engage and exchange knowledge on environmental conservation.

Among those present at the ceremony were the deputy headmaster of Mulunguzi Secondary School, Mr. Bento Mpaso, and

the patron of the school's Wildlife and Environment Club, Mr. Asima Saidi.

Mr. Mpaso expressed his gratitude for the visit and conveyed his desire for his students to be invited to UNIMA for an educational visit. He believes such a visit would inspire students to work hard by giving them an opportunity to explore the university's environment, laboratories, and academic atmosphere. He hopes that one day, they too can become part of the university's student community and, in turn, inspire others.

Mr. Saidi commended UNIMAWES for the initiative and encouraged them to continue their efforts.

“Your visit has motivated our students, and this will likely encourage them to continue taking care of our environment and take pride in being part of this club. Sometimes, students may not see the value of being a member due to a lack of motivation and recognition, but with this visit, they will be more interested in joining and actively participating,” he said.

He also suggested that UNIMAWES visit them again to educate the students on how to repurpose waste into useful products as a sustainable waste management strategy.



Mulunguzi Secondary School students at the function.



Members of the UNIMA Economics Society at the RBM offices in Lilongwe.

Economics Students Engage with RBM Experts

Students at the University of Malawi gain skills and diverse knowledge from various experts affiliated with well-known institutions, including both government and non-governmental organizations, through the societies to which they belong on campus.

On 4th April 2025, the University of Malawi Economics Society undertook an educational visit to the Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM) in Lilongwe. The primary objectives of the visit was to gain a deeper understanding of the RBM's role in managing the country's money supply, overseeing currency auctions, and fulfilling its regulatory responsibilities — specifically the registration and supervision of financial institutions operating in Malawi.

The visit also covered the functions of the RBM's Special Unit for Mineral Purchases and the bank's collaboration with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Upon arrival, the Economics society was warmly welcomed by Mr. Muopeni Ngwalo, the Manager of Currency Planning and Policy, who hosted the delegation for an introductory session in the RBM's auditorium, which lasted approximately 30 minutes. Following this, the students were escorted to the RBM's Clubhouse, where the main presentations and interactive engagements took place. These included detailed briefings by various department representatives and open discussions that allowed students to ask questions and gain insights directly from RBM officials.

Students appreciated the visit and the lessons they received from the experts at the Reserve Bank of Malawi. A third-year Bachelor of Arts in Economics student, Ms. Rejoice Mpinganjira, shared her experience, stating that she had the opportunity to learn how monetary policy is determined, formulated, and implemented by the RBM.

"We also explored currency issues, where

we examined some of the security features on our banknotes and learned about the penalties for forging money," she said. "I also had the privilege of learning about inflation targeting and policy-making. Additionally, we were taught how financial institutions are monitored to ensure they comply with regulations while maintaining stability in the financial sector."

The students were accompanied by their lecturer, Mr. Edward Lemani, and the visit proved to be highly informative and enriching, offering students a valuable opportunity to bridge theoretical economic concepts with practical applications in monetary policy, financial regulation, and international economic cooperation. It was a memorable and fruitful experience for all participants.

The students extended their gratitude to the officials at the RBM for the insightful sessions and the rich, eye-opening experience.



Handing over of the items.

UNIMA Social Work Students Donate to Grace Orphan Care

In commemoration of World Social Work Day on 18th March this year, the Social Work Students Society at the University of Malawi made a generous donation of assorted items to Grace Orphan Care in Thundu, Zomba. The students, accompanied by Mr. Austin Ndala, a UNIMA lecturer and patron of the society, arrived in large numbers to cheer the children, carrying placards with different messages as a way of celebrating the day.

Grace Orphan Care, established in 2004 by Mr. Ernest Ponde Ponde, has had a significant impact on the lives of many

children, providing them with much-needed educational support. Among its success stories, is that of 60 children who have gone on to attain secondary school education. Some of the orphanage's former beneficiaries are now active supporters of the organization, alongside other well-wishers, helping to ensure the continuity of its mission.

During the handover ceremony, UNIMA students had the opportunity to engage in an interactive session with the orphans, offering words of encouragement to inspire them to remain dedicated to their education despite any challenges they may

face. The students also spread awareness about World Social Work Day and the importance of celebrating the efforts of social workers who make a lasting impact on the lives of many deserving individuals.

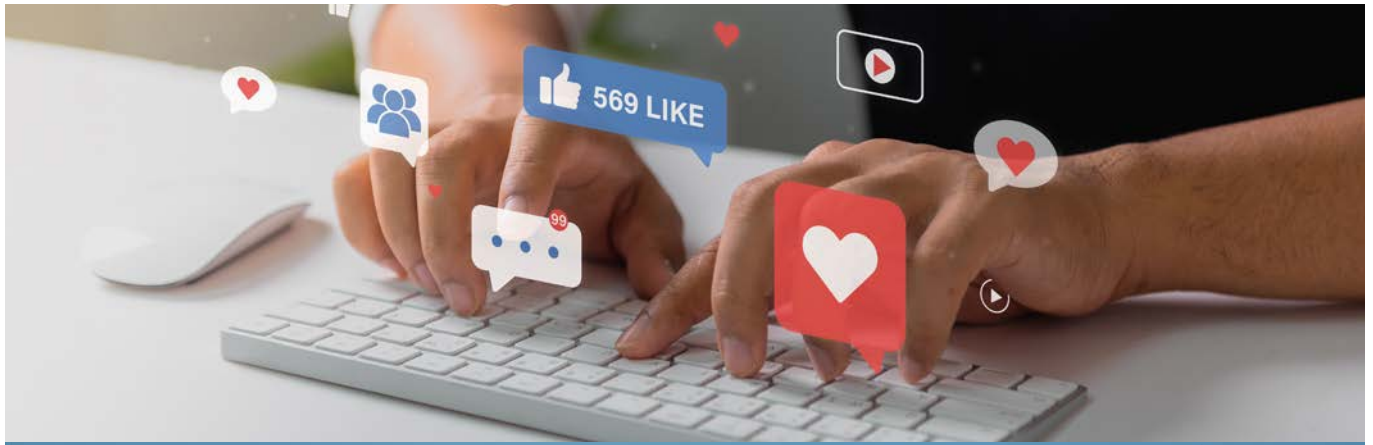
During the event, the Deputy Director of Grace Orphan Care, Mr. Jailosi Maonga, expressed heartfelt gratitude for the donation, emphasizing how vital such contributions are in sustaining the organization's work. He also urged other individuals and groups to follow suit, ensuring that the orphanage can continue its mission of providing a brighter future for the children it serves.

Mr. Brave Nkhoma, the president of the Social Work Students Society, pointed out that the decision to donate the items to Grace Orphan Care was based on the recognition of the orphanage's pressing need for support. The donation not only provided tangible goods but also served as a reminder of the power of social work and community collaboration in uplifting marginalized groups.

The event served as an important reminder of the positive impact Social Work students can have in their communities, demonstrating the value of solidarity and care for those in need.



Students pose for a photo at the orphanage.



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