UNIVERSITIES SOUTH AFRICA

4th USAf Higher Education Conference

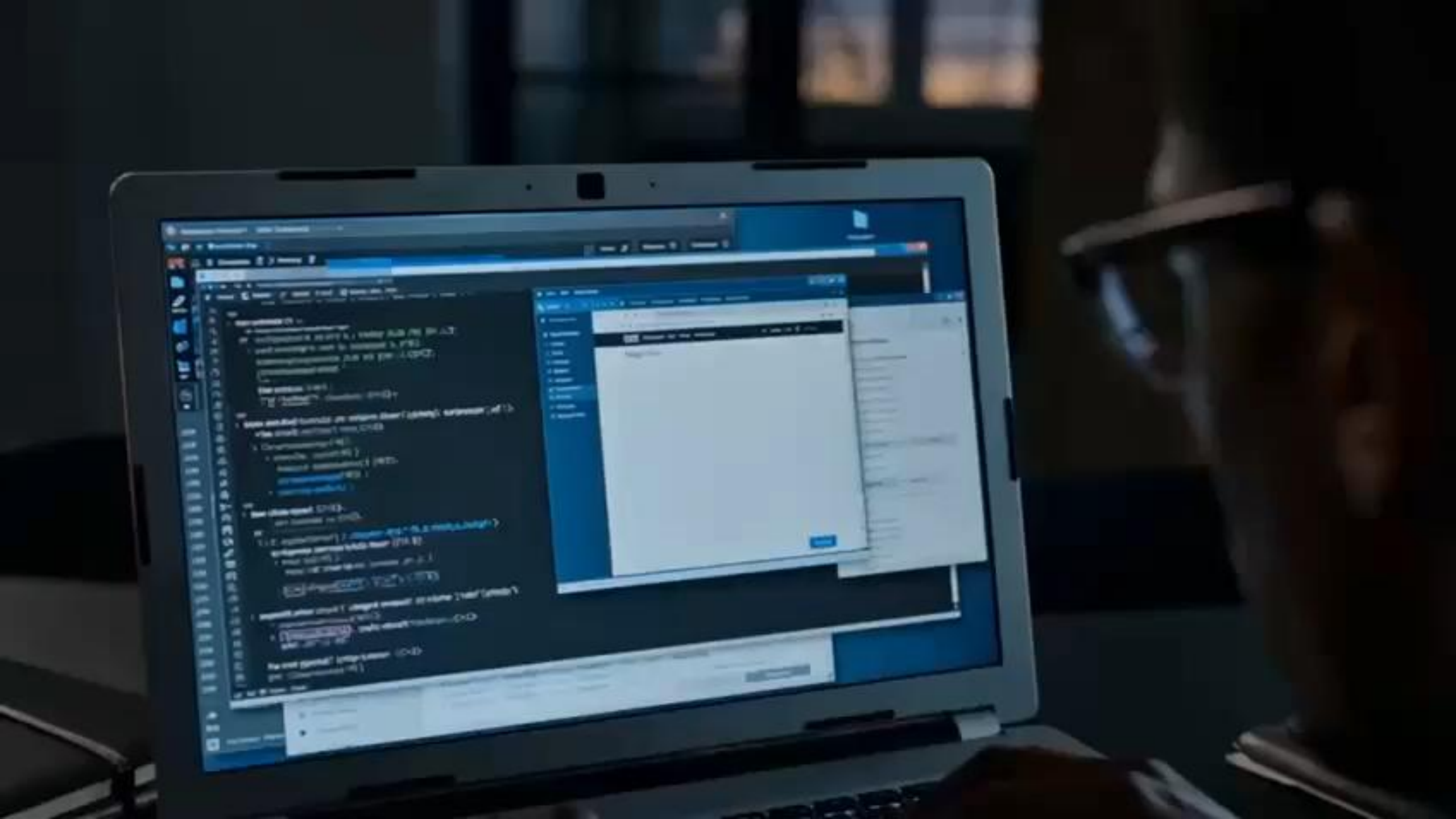


Professor Thenjiwe Meyiwa

Vice-Chancellor and Principal,
University of Mpumalanga

Session

Sustainability of Higher Education through Collaboration



UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA

Creating Opportunities

SUSTAINING UMP UNIVERSITY THROUGH COLLABORATION

FROM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO SHARED DEVELOPMENTAL VALUE

Prof Thenjiwe Meyiwa

06 AUGUST 2026


UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA

MBOMBELA – WEST CAMPUS





UMP Great Hall 2025





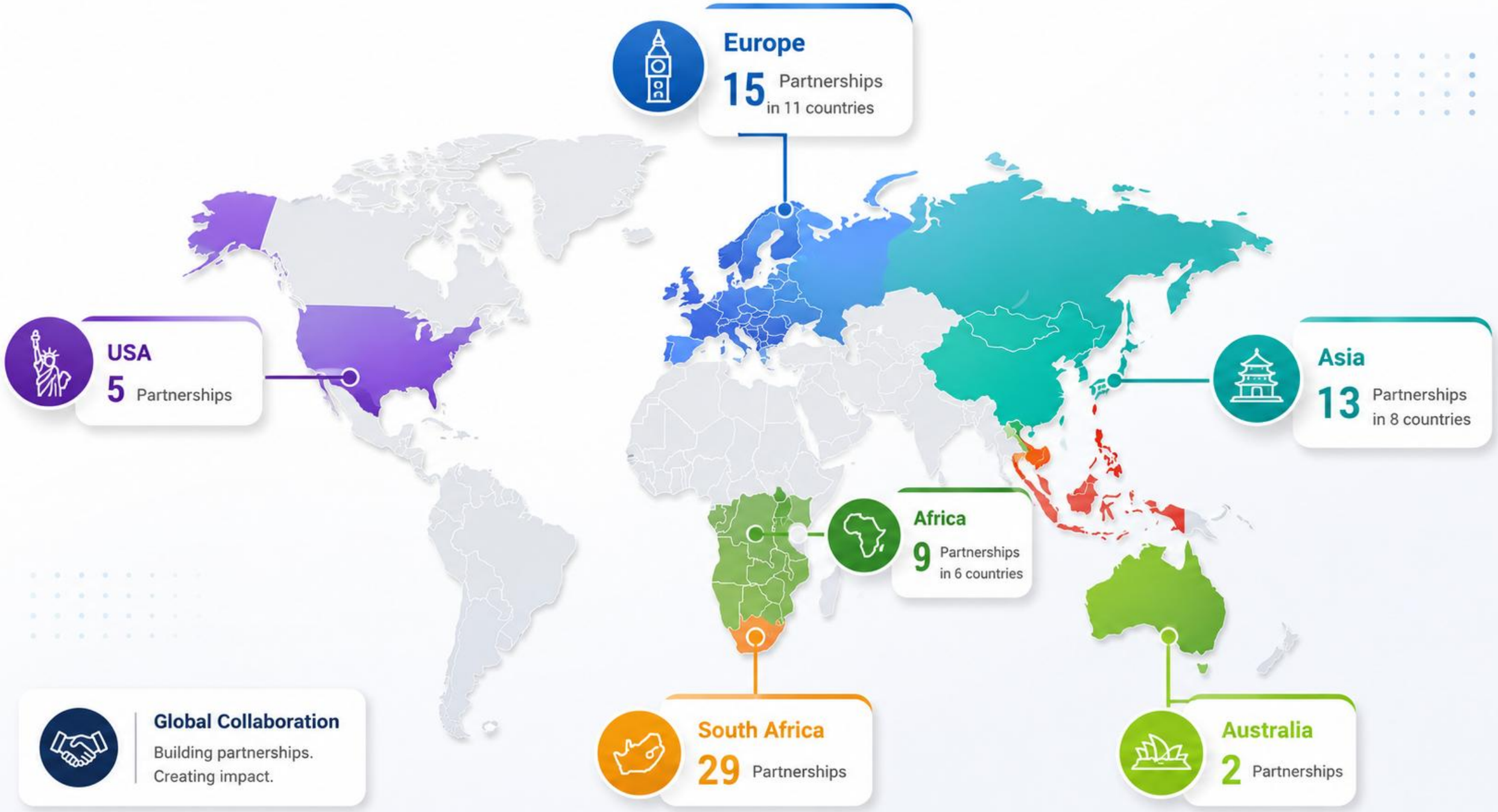


Nature Conservation Building

NO UNIVERSITY CAN BE SUSTAINABLE ALONE

No organisation can be sustainable alone!

- For newer institutions, sustainability is not simply a funding question.
- Crucial to remain academically credible, financially viable, socially relevant, with sound governance.
- Strategic question is therefore: **what can we build together that none of us can build alone?**
- Quadruple helix → Academia, industry, government, and farming communities.
- Food security to economic sustainability: SA–Germany Sustainable& Resilient Food Systems (UKUDLA)
- Hybrid rice project ← SA imports + 1 million tons of rice per year @R8 billion


Europe
15 Partnerships
in 11 countries
USA
5 Partnerships
Asia
13 Partnerships
in 8 countries
Africa
9 Partnerships
in 6 countries
South Africa
29 Partnerships
Australia
2 Partnerships
Global Collaboration
Building partnerships.
Creating impact.

REFRAIMING SUSTAINAIBILITY

deliberately moves beyond funding alone

GOVERNANCE

adaptive leadership

& accountability

ACADEMIC

research, teaching

& innovation

FINANCIAL

diversified income

& bankable projects

SOCIAL

legitimacy, relevance

& public value

RESILIENCE

capacity to adapt

through uncertainty &

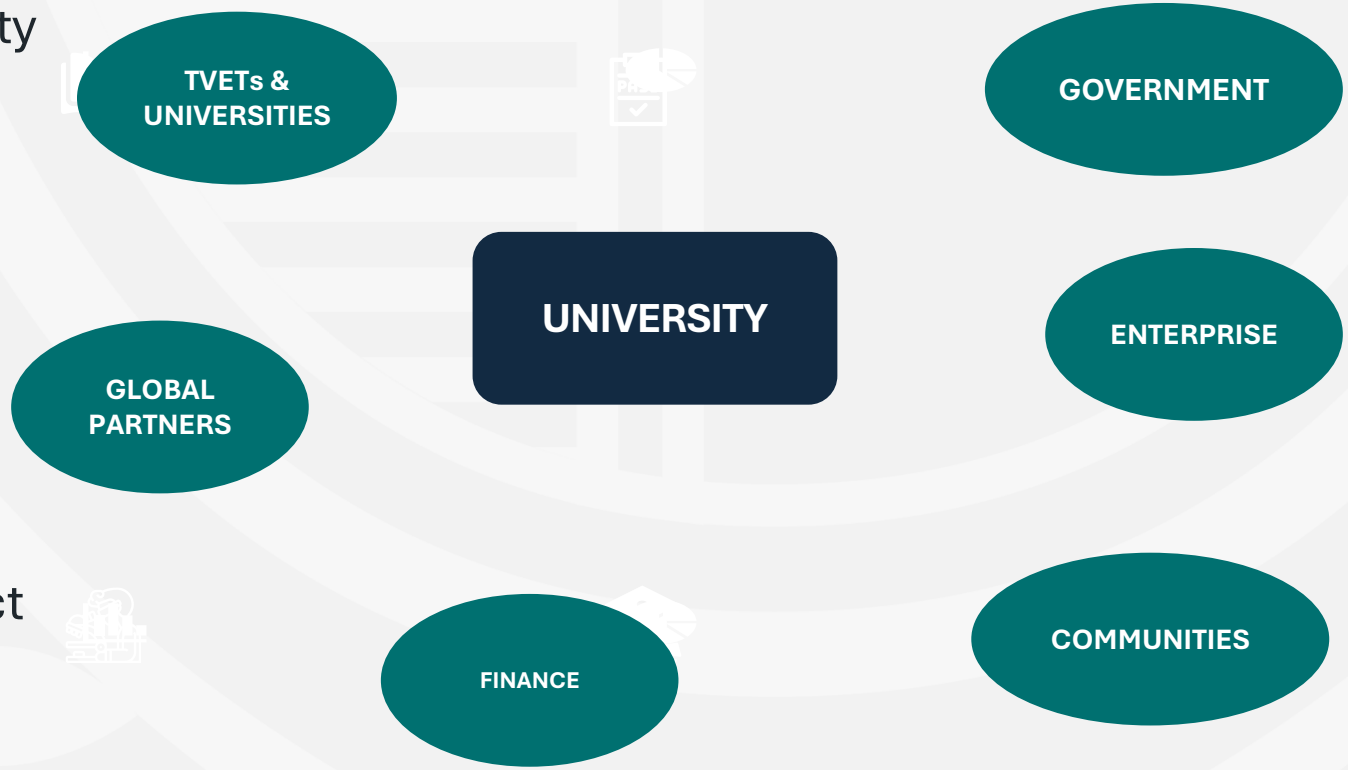
efficiency

Sustainability = institutional capacity + ecosystem capacity

UMP PROPOSITION: CONVERT KNOWLEDGE INTO LIVELIHOODS

UMP proposition: Convert knowledge into livelihoods

- Move from an isolated university to an ecosystem university.
- Anchor the academic plan in real provincial, national and continental priorities.
- Build partnerships that connect knowledge, capital, government capability, enterprise and communities.



FOOD SECURITY BECOMES ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Case 1: Food security becomes economic sustainability

Hybrid Rice Project: Quadruple-helix model (b) RSA–Germany Bilateral Research in Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems (SARChI SuReFoodS

THE PROBLEM

- Rice imports
- Food security
- Unemployment

THE COLLABORATION

- UMP research
- Government land & extension
- Enterprise & commercialisation
- Finance

THE OPPORTUNITY

- 7–8 t/ha target
- 20% import-replacement ambition
- +15,000-job potential

RII STRATEGIC GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Position UMP as a rapidly emerging research-informed university in South Africa with local relevance, regional impact and global recognition

01
Strengthen IRTs with sustained reputation for innovation, relevance and research and teaching linkages

02
Develop a well prepared corps of next-generation researchers through supportive approaches to PG training and early career development

03
Build a critical mass of motivated and inspiring research leaders and mentors who are well-supported by research services

04
Drive accelerated research growth by leveraging top-tier expertise to contribute to priority areas and other high-impact issues

05
Establish flexible, efficient governance and management systems that prioritise continuous improvement, accountability, and swift decision-making

06
Achieve steady growth in technological and social innovations that contribute to development and financial sustainability

CASE 2: STATE OF GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Case 2: From consuming technology to creating solutions

- UMP's AI strategy is framed around solving real institutional and community challenges.

- The partnership model localises technology through collaboration with industry, IDC and local entrepreneurs.

- The ambition is not merely to teach AI, but to empower staff, government, councillors and young people to use AI for service delivery and job creation.

AI MASTERY → CAPABILITY → SOLUTIONS → JOBS

Ambition: train over 10 million South Africans in AI mastery

THREE TESTS FOR SUSTAINABLE COLABORATION

1

PROBLEM-LED, NOT MOU-LED AND GOVERNANCE SOUND

Start with a shared challenge. Let the partnership architecture follow the problem.

2

BANKABLE, NOT PROJECT-BOUND

Bring financiers and commercialisation partners into the design early; so research can travel beyond the journal.

3

LOCALLY ANCHORED, GLOBALLY CONNECTED

Solve for Mpumalanga and South Africa while building strategic links across Africa and the world.

4

DECISIVE LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE SOUND

Ensures implementation, credible oversight and intergrity.

FROM MONOLOGUES TO CO-CREATION

A challenge for African higher education

“The agenda for building the capacities of African higher education institutions for the continent’s development and transformation is too serious for any of its stakeholders to indulge in solitary monologues.”

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, “Funding African Universities”

PROPOSITION I LEAVE WITH THE CONFERENCE

LET US STOP ASKING:
"What can my university do?"

AND ASK:
"What can we build together?"

- Shared challenges → shared platforms
- Shared knowledge → shared capability
- Shared investment → shared value
- Shared accountability → shared resilience

If the problem is collective, the solution MUST BE collaborative

Thank you
Ngiyabonga

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