THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING DEPARTMENT

Great East Road Campus| P.O Box 32379| Lusaka, 10101| Tel: +260 211 251 593|
Fax: +260 1 253 952 | Email: comm.marketing@unza.zm | Website: www.unza.zm

---

Press Release

HIGHER EDUCATION DAY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Zambia Puts Universities at the Centre of Its Economic Transformation Agenda

LUSAKA, 24 November 2026 — The Government of Zambia, universities, industry partners, financial institutions, students and young people converse on how universities can assist to chart a new course for the country's economic transformation through research, innovation, skills development, job creation, and improving the livelihoods of its people in line with the Grow Zambia Agenda and Ninth National Development Plan (9NDP) during the Zambia Higher Education Day on Thursday, 26 November 2026.

During this high-level event, which precedes the University of Zambia (UNZA)'s Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the 22nd Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) Annual General Meeting, scheduled for Lusaka from 30 November to 4 December 2026, will be held at UNZA Graduate School of Business, Great East Road campus. Participants will examine how higher education, research, science, technology and innovation can accelerate the Government's development programmes.

The timing is signigicant because this year Government has presented bold development decisions for the country. In September 2026, The Grow Zambia Agenda was launched, to more than double the economy within five (5) years through eight production targets in agriculture, energy, mining and tourism. The Amended Education Act of 2026 makes access to education up to secondary school level a legal right unlocking access opportunity, whilst the 9NDP is being prepared. These are solid imperatives for development planning, investments and actions.

What Universities and their partners offer every household in Zambia

At the centre of the event is a fundamental development question: how can Zambia translate its national economic ambitions into tangible improvements in the lives of ordinary citizens? The answer, in significant measure, lies in the country's capacity to produce relevant skills, generate scientific knowledge, commercialise research, stimulate entrepreneurship and develop innovative solutions to national challenges. According to the keynote paper prepared by the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI), doubling the economy in five years as indicated in Grow Zambia

Co-Organisers

Strategy,needs economic growth of about 14.9% a year, twice the projected growth 7% now. Moreover, productivity is low for example,maize fields average about 1.95 tonnes per hectare, against a potential of 12.6 tonnes: a gap that decides whether a family's maize runs out before the rains or lasts until the next harvest.

Closing that gap depends on science. The most recent evaluation of the science capacity in the country in the field of agriculture had only about 246 full-time-equivalent agricultural researchers, 14% of them with doctorates, while spending on agricultural research was below 0.1% of GDP.

Further, the 2025 labour force survey conducted by the ministry of labour and social security reports that unemployment among young people aged 15 to 24 years old is 29.1%, and about three in every four jobs are informal, without a contract or a pension. Meanwhile, free secondary education means more young people than ever will finish Grade 12. The higher education's sector's 213 registered institutions, serving about 197,000 students, must therefore plan for many more learners, and for the teachers to teach them. The combined and integrated work of Research and Policy and enterprise too is a must have. And that's is where higher education adds the value being fundermental for all three critical drivers of economic growth.

What the Day is expected to deliver

IAPRI's Dr Brian P. Mulenga presents the keynote paper, ***"From Ambition to Delivery: Foresight, Economic and Policy Evidence for the Grow Zambia Agenda and the National Development Plan",*** followed by panel discussions on science, technology and innovation; jobs and wealth creation; and the role of higher education institutions.

Participants are expected to adopt the Lusaka Communiqué, with an action plan setting out commitments on science, technology and innovation; skills, jobs and enterprise; the role of higher education institutions; and evidence, monitoring and accountability. The Communiqué will be presented to the RUFORUM AGM and submitted to the Government as an input to the 9NDP.

Event details

When: Thursday, 26 November 2026, 08:30–14:30

Where: Graduate School of Business, University of Zambia, Lusaka

Convener: University of Zambia (UNZA)

Co-Organisers: Government of the Republic of Zambia, RUFORUM, UNZA, Copperbelt University, Mulungushi University and Kapasa Makasa University

Contact: Mr. Chibale Damaseke, Acting Head Communication and Marketing at UNZA

damaseke.chibale@unza.ac.zm

Co-Organisers