

UMOJA BUDDY PROGRAMME CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP DAY

Story by: Bulelwa Moikwathai – Coordinator of the Umoja Buddy Programme

The Umoja Buddy Programme within the Office for International Affairs is celebrating International Friendship Day. As proclaimed by the United Nations (UN), International Friendship Day is celebrated by people on 30 July every year to recognise the values and the importance of friendships in promoting peace across cultures. The Umoja Buddy Programme celebrated this day by walking around campus, meeting different students and staff, and handing out chocolates and messages of friendship in celebration of this day – playing our part in promoting peace and unity within the campus community.



Messages on friendship and the chocolates

The Umoja Buddy Programme was launched in 2018 as the ‘Wingman programme’, which was predominantly aimed at improving the exchange student experience at the University of the Free State. Following the success of the pilot implementation, the programme was strengthened in 2019 to include all first-entering international students. The Umoja Buddy Programme seeks to ensure a smooth transition and integration of international students into student life at the UFS, helping them integrate into the campus and local communities. The programme aims to connect international and local students through **meaningful lifelong friendships** and to foster their academic, social, and cultural integration at the UFS.



Umoja Buddy Programme Ambassadors

Designed to enhance the international and intercultural competencies of UFS students, the programme pairs first-entering international students with current UFS students, providing a warm, welcoming, and friendly face, a helping hand, and a first UFS friendship that makes a world of difference for the new arrivals. The programme adopts the UFS vision whereby every student will in the future have an international experience during UFS studies through internationalisation at home.



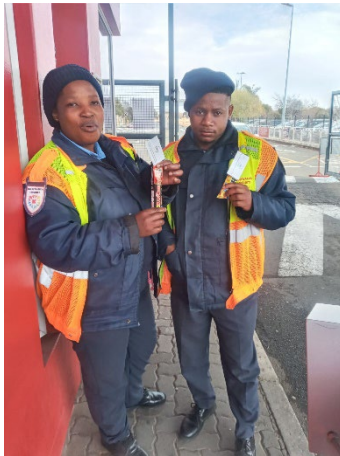
Ambassadors spent the day giving hugs to members of the UFS community



Ambassadors with students and staff from CUADS



Ambassadors with staff members from Student Affairs



Members of the UFS Protection Services

The Ambassadors end off the day by creating an International Friendship Day Canvas



For more information on the programme: [Umoja-buddy/about-the-programme](https://www.umoja-buddy.co.za/about-the-programme)