

UBP End-of-Year Event



In the picture: UBP, SASUF, and UFS staff members

Date: 1 November 2025

Time: 13:00–16:00

Venue: Mooimeisiesfontein

Collaborating portfolios: SASUF and the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice

On 1 November 2025, the Umoja Buddy Programme (UBP) hosted its annual end-of-year event at Mooimeisiesfontein on the University of the Free State campus. As is customary within the programme, the event served as an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the year, recognise the dedication and commitment of the ambassadors, and reflect on the programme's progress in advancing the objectives of the International Office. The event aligned with the University's vision and mission by promoting the values of social justice, care, and excellence, while also nurturing a culture of intercultural understanding and inclusivity among students.

The event took the form of an informal Sip and Paint – a creative and interactive activity combining art, relaxation, and social engagement. Students from SASUF and UBP participated in an informal networking and cultural exchange event, enjoying light refreshments and background music to create a relaxed and joyful atmosphere.

Goal Alignment

The UBP end-of-year function aligned with **Goal 5: Internationalisation at Home**, which aims to provide every local and international student with meaningful cultural exchange and



global experiences. UFS students and staff gathered to share their painting skills, influenced by their diverse cultural backgrounds. As the year drew to a close, students were invited to share their reflections and suggestions to help strengthen the programme for the upcoming year.

Students' reflections included:

- *"The programme was incredibly amazing. I learnt a lot from my colleagues and met new people. The events pushed me out of my comfort zone—something I've been avoiding for a long time—but within UBP, I excelled because I was given the opportunity."*
- *"The programme was nothing but the best. I could not get hold of my buddy, but I managed to mingle with other students and form friendships."*
- *"Joining the programme helped me to socialise and made me aware that there are people willing to assist in any situation. What stood out for me was the importance of kindness."*
- *"It has been an amazing experience, but I wish there were more events to keep us interested in the programme. Otherwise, it was a great journey."*
- *"It was fun; however, more activities are needed to engage international students."*
- *"More events are needed to raise awareness of the programme. A meet-and-greet for Umoja Buddy Ambassadors during training would help. Ambassadors also need more involvement in creating enjoyable experiences."*
- *"There needs to be more visibility from the office. We need more events involving ambassadors and their international counterparts, and more consistency. I believe the programme can play a pivotal role in fostering understanding between diverse groups. The office should also partner with student organisations to increase participation."*

In a Nutshell

The end-of-year event was a resounding success, encapsulating the programme's spirit of inclusivity, intercultural awareness, and integration. Students not only celebrated their achievements but also explored their creative abilities in an environment that encouraged connection and relaxation.

The reflections and recommendations provided by students were particularly valuable. Several students highlighted how the programme encouraged them to step outside their comfort zones and contributed positively to their personal growth. Others emphasised the need for increased programme visibility, more frequent activities, and additional dialogues or engagements to sustain interest and broaden the programme's reach and impact.

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Commendations

We extend our sincere appreciation to SASUF, the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice, UFS staff members, and all other stakeholders for their support and dedication in ensuring the event's success.