

VC's BLOG: In my life I have learnt (No.2 of 2015 – to be published 2 March 2015)

Good day Unisans

Unisan: (n) one belonging to and sharing the values of Unisa.

Greetings! This week I speak to you with a heavy heart. We have covered the subject of stewardship previously yet Unisa does still seem not to understand my message. In the last week I have seen reports of excessive paper wastage and photographs of food that is wasted and thrown away. Who are these people who do not respect the property and resources of Unisa? I really want to know them and expose them because they make me very angry. And you should feel the same!

The sensible and efficient way to achieve optimum resource management is to plan effectively. We can be conservative when ordering food for meetings rather than to over-order “just in case.” At home, do you cook just enough for the family or do you cater for the possibility that visitors may arrive whilst you are eating your supper? Unisa has guidelines in place for ordering food for meetings, which can be easily accessed at: (https://staff.unisa.ac.za/e-connect/e-notice/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Guidelines_catering_11June2014.pdf) Managers need to also monitor the orders from stores and the catering and entertainment that is approved. This is not just a cost saving imperative but also an issue of good health and better eating for staff. Kristin Espinasse wrote on her blog “*smaller portions, sympathy for the cook, and a respect for food leave little room for waste.*”

I was taught not to waste since I was a child and this message should be central to all of us, given the poverty and deprivation that is prevalent in our country and continent. At home, you will not leave lights on or a tap running - let us commit to applying the same principles in respect of the electrical appliances that we use in our offices. Switch off the lights if you leave your office, ensure that water is shut after using the tap and report leaking taps.

We also need to bear in mind that what we consider as “waste” may be deemed an opportunity for others so don't just throw away stuff. For example, the examination writing pads that were allocated for recycling were ‘saved’ by the Sustainability Office and distributed for use by Grade 12 pupils at a number of disadvantaged schools in Johannesburg. Unisa is serious about the ethical management of its resources, even when they have become redundant!

In my life, I have learned that we need to learn to do more with less - this is not difficult to achieve if we all apply our collective minds and practices to simple efficiencies.

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