



THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS: 2019

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Delivered by

Prof Thandwa Mthembu
Vice-Chancellor & Principal

27/28 February 2019

DUT Chancellor, in absentia, Ms Nonkululeko Nyembezi;

Chairperson of Council, in absentia, Mr Wiseman Madinane;

Members of Council;

President of Convocation, Mr Siyabonga Vezi

Members of Convocation and our broader alumni;

Representatives of our stakeholders and partners in government, business/industry and from the broader society;

Representatives of the media;

Members of our Executive and Senior Management teams;

Union Leaders;

Staff members, academic and support services;

SRC President, Mr Sesiyanda Godlimpi and Deputy SRC President, Mr Lindani Zungu

Members of the SRC and the entire student body;

Distinguished and esteemed guests;

At the time we confirmed to host this inaugural State of the University Address (SOUA) last year as a critical element of the University's planning and engagement framework, we did not anticipate that it would be preceded by regrettable events that would almost dampen our zeal for the year.

As everyone might surmise, we agonised over whether we should cancel it altogether as we did last year because of the longest staff strike. Having considered and accepted the complexity immanent in a university system, and a number of critical risks we could mitigate, we felt it would be in the best interests of DUT to continue with this important function about our future. We could not just miss it the second year running.

At the outset, may I request that we all rise and observe a moment of silence in memory of our departed student, Mr Mlungisi Madonsela and our departed staff member, Dr Euvette Taylor? The University communicated widely on these two tragedies. Therefore, I will not delve into the details of causes and effects. It suffices, however, to, once again, express our sincerest and heartfelt condolences to the two families, friends, students and colleagues. It is my sincerest hope that we never experience tragedies of this nature again at DUT.

Chairperson, members of Council, colleagues, students and distinguished guests, let me also take this opportunity to send our collective sympathies to Ms Mbali Ntoza, her family and friends. She is the SRC Administrator at our Durban campuses and should be well-known to many of the people who hurled bricks and stones at her. She sustained life-threatening injuries on the day of the violent protest, and had to be operated on for hours. She is recovering at home. We profusely apologise to her and her family. I also extend our sympathies to other staff members and students who were intimidated, threatened and those who may have sustained injuries on the day no matter how minor, including the husband to one of our staff members.

A number of investigations are taking place, particularly with regard to the death of Mr Madonsela and all circumstances around it. Council, at its next meeting in about three weeks, will consider further steps that could be taken to understand much deeper all issues related to that fateful day, the 5th of February 2019. Such further steps will help the University community to devise efficient and effective strategies on how best to handle protests on our campuses. Careful not to put the cart before the horse, I have also directed the Student Services section to work closely with the SRC, and perhaps include other stakeholders, to consider how best both the day and week of the death of Mr Madonsela could be commemorated by the University starting in 2020.

The delivery of this State of the University Address happens exactly 29 months since my appointment as Vice-Chancellor & Principal at DUT. It also takes place a few weeks shy of 24 months since I delivered my inaugural address on 17 March 2017. Essentially then, it is about looking back at the commitments I made then, what has happened in the interregnum and plans that are in place to project ourselves forward to greatness.

To do this, I will use a methodology or a framework developed over a number of years now, I call the 4Ps Framework of management accounting, namely: **P**eople, **P**lans, **P**ennies and **P**roducts. As I run through these four elements briefly, and infuse some elements from my inaugural address entitled: “**DUT: Transforming, Upscaling and Developing**”, I will point to, under each element, areas of transformation, areas of development and the upscaling we have either implemented or are planning to implement.

Before I delve into DUT’s 4Ps and how we have transformed, up-scaled and developed DUT so far and how we will do so into the future, I must hasten to recall that my address two years back hovered around the national topical issues of the time in the higher education sector together with a few quintessentially DUT issues. A combination of these defined the backdrop and the context of the start of our journey in the DUT bus to our collective destination of greatness, with me as the driver.

Two years later, it is evident as we gather here that it would be disingenuous to attempt to talk about DUT without referring to the #Shutdown crisis we have just emerged from with, sadly, blood dripping all over us. The complex and ever-evolving national and regional political and socio-economic contexts, especially during an election year, are an integral part of this explosive mix.

National imperatives, national and institutional culture

The announcement mid-December of ‘free higher education’ – or the bursary scheme as it is now officially called - by the former President has been the most significant intervening development between the two moments of my inaugural address and this address. While it is surely designed to accelerate expansion of access to higher education by students who would otherwise not afford, it has also, perhaps inadvertently, led to the current instability in the sector, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. This is not so dissimilar to what we witnessed during the #Fallist Movement of 2015 onwards.

To some, there is apparent confusion or misunderstanding about the implementation of ‘free higher education’. Even when there are obvious underlying political motives about protests, this apparent confusion is exploited liberally to legitimise instability in our universities. Councils and managements are forced to continually suspend academic activity, as students increasingly get violent in demanding what is outside the existing policy. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has been unequivocal in its pronouncements that ‘free higher education’ – the bursary scheme - is being introduced

incrementally, starting in 2018, and that the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) only funds the first/primary qualification.

Demands that are now being made of NSFAS to fund postgraduate studies should be raised within the context of reason and rationality. Sadly, universities are now being held to ransom by the very people who should be the motive forces for, and beneficiaries of, our democratic dispensation; people who should be torchbearers of a human rights culture in our country. With the knowledge and education that university students have, one would think they would use their high level and sophisticated skills at reason, rationality and debate and not sheer physical and brutal force that belongs in the realm of primal instincts. Opportunism, populism, distortions, lies, somersaults and dishonourable behaviour have replaced reason, rationality and debate, which are the foundations upon which the very idea of a university was birthed.

In my inaugural speech, I commented thus; and, I am of the view this is still relevant today:

“We have seen rage and violence being valorized and being unleashed on our broader society and no less on our lecture rooms, halls, laboratories and libraries. The difficulties that students have with paying fees are not the cause of their rage. The #FeesMustFall movement is not the cause of problems universities have. These are all symptoms of stunted economic growth in South Africa. In turn, this sad state of affairs leads to poverty and unemployment that affect a substantial portion of our society; not only university students.

It’s time our students find a new legacy. That legacy should not just be a shadow of past legacies of struggle, past chants, past songs, past dances. It should be a bright new light that shines on all of South Africa. It should be about the [like a] ripened fruit for all of us to enjoy and not a wormed fruit [that will make all of us spit and puke]. That legacy should not be akin to birds pooping on South Africa [and its democracy] whilst it expects a comfortable shade under the tree [a shade that our young people should be to South Africa].

It’s time, without apportioning blame and without being degenerative and retrogressive, our youth focuses hawk-like on how to extricate this socio-economy from the doldrums it is in. It’s not about who sunk our socio-economy that will make us prosper; but, who lifted it up from the doldrums. That would be a better legacy.

So, I hope, although our students may be enraged, they will also remain engaged with change and remain enthralled in [building this new legacy] of advancing our dear nation [socio-economically].”

Rage and doing whatever it shall direct us to do have become the way of life at DUT. A way of life of many South Africans. In this (il)logic, the noble and lofty ends justify the ignoble and debased means! The education sector – from primary schools to universities – has not been spared from rage and destruction and from ignoble and debased means of achieving noble ends.

Our country is at a crossroads. Unless the brave amongst us stand up and speak, we will soon find ourselves being universities existing only in name, in a failed country that once had a name amongst its peers around the world. Looking back over the past few years, it is not difficult to suggest that we may have entered a moment of implosion where, as William Butler Yeats lamented in 1919: “*The falcon cannot hear the falconer*” as “*mere anarchy is loosed upon the world*”...

Before South Africa implodes, something drastic must be done to reverse these debased primal instincts that get unleashed on all of our society. It's a national scourge. It's a national question. I wonder where our political leaders are. Perhaps, it's a matter of, to quote Yeats again: "*The best lack[ing] all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity*".

As national culture deteriorates, so does our institutional culture. As our leaders feed on the Gupta and Bosasa troughs; so do scores of our people at DUT feed on dead people as they make fraudulent insurance claims. While we call on politicians and leaders of society to stand up and speak, as a university community we must also stand up and speak truth to ourselves first and then to the broader society. Most, if not all, revolutions have been aided and abetted by the intelligentsia that we, including our students who may think they are not, are an integral part of. We must start a new revolution against valorisation of the basest of our primal instincts; against intimidation, threats and violence; against irregularities and corruption. It should start here at DUT!

People

Our people – students, staff, alumni, partners and stakeholders - are all important in helping to achieve our objectives.

In my inaugural address, I argued that the narrow focus on numbers alone without the attendant qualitative changes in our institutional profile, value systems, institutional culture, structures, processes and systems will, unfortunately, not transform but deform both the University and our broader society, leaving all of us misshaped and disfigured, if not imperilled. The only way transformation will catapult our University and our country into greatness is if it does not shun excellence – whether it is in our lecture rooms, in our administrative and management offices and in our engagements with the broader society. This is the only route to greatness. In this respect, the mantra I always communicate to staff and students alike, thanks to Jim Collins, goes: the **Right People** in the **Right Seats** performing the **Right Roles**.

We are far from living this mantra at DUT. We are far from living the values we espouse in our glossy documents. We are far from being a caring, competent, versatile, deliberative, empowering, nurturing, and a productive people.

A number of departmental reviews, especially in Human Resources, Finance and Real Estate Management, together with a broader institutional review, were completed in 2018. The institutional review, in particular, implores us to look deeply at our academic viability, financial sustainability and our human resources planning and capacity. With these, we hope to boldly jettison the legacies of the 2002 merger of ML Sultan and Natal Technikons and the incorporation of Riverside and Indumiso campuses, once and for all, and build a new DUT. We will implement the recommendations with tact, finesse, speed, and agility. Most importantly, we will brook no obfuscation.

The new DUT will require industriousness and performance by all. To this effect, we have introduced a system of 360-degree assessments of behavioural attributes at grades P1-P5 in order to highlight the importance of human behaviour and its effect on culture and performance. This is in addition to the performance management system that was introduced at these levels in 2018 and will be cascaded to lower levels from 2019 onwards.

Achieving formal organisational objectives is not enough to create the kind of institutional culture we desire. How we individually and collectively conduct ourselves in our relations with seniors, peers and

those we supervise is equally cardinal. Largely, people need to have a sense of hope for the future, belonging and being cared for before they could serve diligently. This is one area we will be addressing in the new Strategic Plan of the university, currently being developed and consulted with a number of stakeholders.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have flagged the area of Student Services for a review this year. We obviously have serious challenges in the manner we engage with our students, In 2017, we started with some structural consolidation under the Registry. The section hosted a successful Strategic Planning session last year in October and made some recommendations that should begin to be implemented in 2019. Some of these may require further research and engagement with external experts. We need a caring, competent, coherent, versatile, deliberative, empowering, nurturing, productive and functional Student Services section. It should, amongst others, help us to deal with perceptions that DUT is the protest capital of the higher education landscape in South Africa.

Chancellor, Chairperson, I must be the first to admit that labour relations were at the lowest point at the beginning of 2018 when we experienced the longest strike in the history of DUT. Quite pleasingly, by the end of the same year, we reached one of the high points of labour relations with the parties signing a 3-year salary agreement before we closed in December 2018. I wish to, again, express my gratitude to all individuals and parties that made this possible. Organisations that are able to share a common vision on critical issues, forge institutional cohesion and build functional pacts are almost always guaranteed greatness.

The emerging stability of labour relations at the strategic level will allow us time and space over the next 3 years to: all focus unwaveringly, without unnecessary in-fighting and petty divisions, on resolving many DUT legacies and backlogs in our broader transformation and change initiatives; in operations and systems; in infrastructure and maintenance; in our new academic programmes; in our research and innovation initiatives, including our entrepreneurship drive; and, in engaging productively with our cities, the broader region and the world at large.

The process of developing and upscaling our students socially and intellectually must take into account the current context in terms of the national and institutional culture I referred to above. While we instil more progressive values, we should also usher our staff and students into the 4th Industrial Revolution, socially and intellectually. From this, and amongst many other outcomes, we must produce that ever-small group of young people that will be leaders in technology, innovation and creativity; young people prepared to tackle great societal problems, many of which are ugly and repulsive. This lies at the heart of the notion of higher education being a public good and an anchor of society.

In the climate of a stunted economy that produces unemployment and inequality, rage and destruction, recoil into primal instincts, we need to educate, train, develop and upscale our young people who will become innovators and entrepreneurs. One of three selected strategic focus areas for more concentrated investment in millions of rand in 2019 is innovation and entrepreneurship education. Through this focus, we hope to build, from among our student body, a coterie of young innovators, entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs. They are the ones who will shun the current legacy of intimidation and threats, of violence and destruction, of unreason and irrationality, of recoiling back into the basest of our primal instincts. They will progressively build a new legacy of great prosperity in our socio-economy not only for themselves and their families; but, for the millions of other young people – more than 80% of our 18-24 year olds – who will never have the opportunity of attending a university.

Ladies and gentlemen, if we should achieve this, this coterie of our students and alumni will be the ripened fruit, not the wormed one, that will feed their counterparts, their families and the rest of society. This coterie of students will not be like those birds sitting high on trees pooping down onto the shade below as our society sits comfortably under it. They will change the face of the cities DUT is located in. They will change the face of our regional economy. They will make DUT and our region places to emulate, places to take lessons from by many parts of the world.

By doing all this we will help not only to **transform** DUT, but **develop** and **upscale** all of its facets.

Plans

People need plans to meet our objectives and targets in order to assess how far we are on the road to greatness. Without plans we could easily find ourselves in undesirable places.

Since 2017, we have radically transformed, developed and up-scaled our institutional planning system. In June 2017, Council approved a revised Strategic Plan: 2015-2019 version 2.0, as we call it.

As part of that process, we not only nuanced and finessed our plan, but we “*threw the javelin*”, as one of our colleagues caricatured the process, right to 2019, with much streamlined objectives, targets and performance indicators. We developed a clearer planning cycle with several milestones throughout the year. We streamlined the structures and systems of engagement and decision-making. We consolidated our planning, budgeting and risk management systems that have become much riper and much more sustainable than they had been.

Cascading from our strategic plan 2.0, we have Annual Performance Plans (APP) and what we call Extended Annual Performance Plans (EAPP). The former is more of a compliance plan in which selected areas of our endeavour are reported on, as required by DHET’s regulations. The latter is an annual operational plan that talks not only to the APP targets, but the rest of our objectives in our strategic plan.

Chancellor, Chairperson, I am proud to announce that even though we struggled in 2015 and 2016 with meeting our enrolment targets – being short marginally by 222 and 143 students, respectively - we have been able not only to meet but exceed our enrolment targets since 2017. Thanks to our faculties, academic departments and recruitment teams that worked hard to ensure we are on track.

Towards the end of 2018, we started discussions on our Enrolment Plan 2020-2025, which is due for submission to DHET in April 2019, after Council’s approval. In addition to the recommendations and targets emanating from the institutional review referred to under the previous sub-section, our enrolment plan targets are poised to revolutionise DUT in various ways.

Chancellor, Chairperson, let me just give you a snapshot of some of our commitments on enrolment planning going forward.

By 2025, we plan to reduce our staff to student ratios substantially to 1:25 as against some of our departments in the Faculty of Management Sciences reeling under the heavy yoke of ratios of over 1:50 that even former model C schools do not have. We cannot assure quality when some of our students are subjected to what a friend of mine, Prof Siphon Seepe, calls “education by rumour and eavesdropping”. This

happens when some of our students are forced to eavesdrop into their lectures when lecture halls are full; or as they hang by the window seals, their friends sharing with them, in hushed tones, what the lecturer had just said.

By 2025, we will improve our proportion of staff with doctorates from the current 24% to 35% and we will substantially reduce the number of those academic staff members categorised as “Other” who have neither Masters nor doctoral degrees. We are no longer a technikon, especially 17 years after we became a university!

Through all the plans referred to above, what we called the ‘*confluence of planning budgeting and risk management*’ at Council’s November 2016 workshop has come to fruition already. We are more adept now at not only planning for each year and period, but incorporating all the risk elements into our objectives and allocating attendant resources.

Relating to comments above about performance, institutional, divisional and individual performance levels are now linked intricately to our Strategic Plan 2.0 and the EAPP. As noted already, the year 2018 saw the introduction of DUT’s Performance Management System for grades PI-P5; a process that will continue to be refined in 2019 and be cascaded throughout the university in due course.

As the year 2018 ended and the year 2019 started, a number of stakeholder engagements on our new Strategic Plan 2020-2030 also started. An engagement in this respect was held with our Council at its September 2018 workshop. Since January, despite the violent student protests, we have held no less than 8 sessions involving just under 1000 staff members from faculties and support divisions, introducing the strategic planning process and the emerging ideas. Avoiding a repeat of my presentations to staff, I do not wish to share the new ideas emerging about our DNA and various other pillars of our new strategic plan.

Ladies and gentlemen, safety and security at our campuses is very important. The porous nature of most of our Durban campuses makes provision of safety and security a nightmare. We engaged the services of an expert company to make a security assessment and make recommendations on what we need to do as a matter of urgency. A report to this end was produced towards the end of 2018 and recommendations therein are being considered for action. It is, indeed, sad that because of the chaos we had early February some security officers who would not normally be called to intervene in areas of protest were called to the scene. The rest that happened is tragic history that will remain haunting us for years to come. I have shared some innovative ideas with the Public Order Police establishment on how we could coordinate our efforts much better during times of protest.

With all of the plans highlighted above, and others I could not find enough time to highlight, we will not only **transform**, but **develop** and **upscale** DUT to become a great university.

Pennies

In order for **P**eople to be at work and produce appreciable products, outputs and outcomes, they need resources; which have to be carefully, strategically and innovatively managed. Bean counting and operational financial management will not help to achieve this goal.

Chancellor, Chairperson, strategic financial management has improved greatly since 2017. Then, with Council's approval, we introduced several financial ratios that assist us in assessing the prudence and equity of our allocations to various strategic line items like salaries, capital expenditure, maintenance and broader infrastructure. In addition, Council also approved six (6) financial sustainability principles that form the basis for allocations to salary expenditure, which, at almost 70% in 2016 and 2017, had become unsustainable.

As of the 2018 and the 2019 budgets, and thanks mainly to increases in the block grant, we have been able to reduce the unsustainable 70% salary allocation to just under 62% of our operating income –made of tuition fees and the block grant. With more work we are still to do as part of our institutional review, we will keep the salary bill within the target set even though we plan to reduce our high staff to student ratios.

When Management says DUT cannot afford to increase the salaries of existing employees beyond certain levels, it is not because we are just being mean and uncaring. It is because we wish to ensure that we relieve the existing employees, especially academics, of the burden of high staff to student ratios, for example.

Between 2009 and 2017, DUT was only able to establish 20 new academic posts, increasing this component from 561 to 581 posts; a paltry 3.5% increase over a 9-year period. Meanwhile, during the same period, headcount student numbers increased by 5735 from 24 026 to 29 761; a whopping 24% increase that is completely incongruent with the 3.5% academic staff growth over that period.

We are about upscaling, indeed. Between 2018 and 2019, we have been able to increase the number of new academic posts at DUT by 82 posts, from 581 to 663, a 14% increase over a 2-year period compared to a 3.5% increase over an entire 9-year period referred to above. As our commitment to improving staff to student ratios suggests, we will do much more between now and 2025 to ensure there will be more academic posts established. We are not just transforming and developing, but upscaling our academic corps in unprecedented ways.

When Management says DUT cannot afford to only prioritise salaries in our budget, it is because we wish to develop and upscale our infrastructure and maintenance; and, transform the look and feel of DUT beyond current dreary state. As noted earlier, historically, allocations to capital expenditure, maintenance and broader infrastructure at DUT have, historically, been embarrassingly unsustainable mainly due to pressures brought to bear to allocate more and more to other budget line items. In 2017, our allocation to these was R76.5m; indeed, a paltry amount for a university of our size. As of 2019, allocation to these has increased by 320% to about R246m; from our own coffers and not through any borrowings!

In addition to this much-increased allocation, thanks to DHET and our Council, the latter having contributed R39m from university coffers, a total of R420m has been allocated over the next 3 years to new buildings as part of DHET's Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (IEG). The construction of two new

buildings in both Pietermaritzburg and Durban will start in April 2019. In addition to this amount, there is about R125m from the 2015/16 to 2017/18 DHET IEG allocation to construction and facilities projects that will also be implemented; increasing the total amount for infrastructure over the next 3 years to about R545m; more than half a billion rand.

The half a billion rand quoted above, given its limitations on where it will be spent, will still not upscale DUT's infrastructure in any substantial way. At Council's insistence in June 2018 for us to leverage our balance sheet, Management is preparing proposals on yet more infrastructure. A priority list of infrastructure projects, emanating from our 2014 MasterPlan, very little of whose envisaged projects had been implemented, has already been prepared, pending Council's approval. Thus, over the next 5 years or so, DUT is likely to see over R1 billion of infrastructure development and upscaling. I wonder how many of those who left DUT say in 2015 will be able to recognise it after all these projects have been implemented.

As I close this section about resources, let me make some pointed comments about the Midlands campuses.

Our Midlands campuses like to present themselves as orphans or poorer cousins of the Durban campuses. How could they be orphans or poorer cousins when between 2016 and 2019, a total of **R649m** (much over half a billion rand) has been invested in our Midlands campuses.

Between 2016 and 2018, **R290m** worth of infrastructure was developed here: the Indumiso Teacher Education facilities were completed in December 2016 at a cost of R90m; the Indumiso Engineering building, new lecture venues and a new library were completed in January 2018 at a cost of R138m; new lecture venues, renovations of the library and a computer laboratory at the Riverside campus were completed in two phases in July 2017 and February 2018, at a cost of R62m.

For 2019 onwards, more new projects are either being designed or being implemented at our Midlands campuses at a total cost of **R359m**, namely: Netball, Tennis and Volleyball courts at a cost of R3.3m; replacement of asbestos roofing at a cost of R5.5m; facilities for disability access at a cost of R1.6m; replacement of windows in residences at a cost of R3.5m. In addition to these, there is R90m allocated to the purchase and renovation of the Transnet building next door which will be part of our residences.

As noted above, the poorer cousins who have had, over the last 3 years or so, invested in them a total of R649m want us to believe they are still poor. They want us to believe they are poor even when at 20% of DUT's student population, the quantum of investment in the Midlands is close to 70% of all the money that has been available over the period for infrastructure development at DUT; meaning that the Durban campuses, with 80% of the student population, have only seen 30% of the money! Who is getting richer – the Midlands or the Durban campuses?

I am not, by any stretch of imagination, suggesting that there are no challenges we face in coordination between the Midlands and Durban; in processes and systems and so forth. As part of the reviews I referred to earlier, we will eventually resolve those challenges collaboratively. But, I hope we will, henceforth, count our blessings and not moan ceaselessly. Let's look forward to building and advancing all of DUT. With the support of all staff and students, and with strategic allocation of our resources to all areas of

development as demonstrated above, we will certainly not only **transform** but upscale DUT's academic profile, its facilities and physical infrastructure across all of our campuses.

Products

People with clear plans and adequate resources need to work together to produce products. Our products are not our students and our graduates. Neither are they are our clients or our customers. They are part of our People, part of our community that we collaborate with as we innovate and produce our teaching-learning and research-innovation products out into the market. Where have you ever seen a customer buying bread being asked to go into the kitchen to help to make that bread? Our students toil in our laboratories to produce many innovations. They are co-creators of all these.

Chancellor, Chairperson, we will be implementing General Education across the board in 2019 to over 7500 students, having started with smaller numbers of students in the previous years. General Education is important in that it strengthens and supplements our formal education programmes by exposing our students to other aspects of academia beyond narrow fields of technology, and developing our students into global citizens. For this purpose, we have allocated a more substantial budget in 2019 for additional resourcing of the Centre for General Education.

Ladies and gentlemen, access to university is one thing. However, success is another. One of our enrolment targets is about improving our success rates to over 85%. Our Siyaphumelela Project, which focuses on data analytics and other broad-based strategies to improve success rates, is proceeding well with the continued support of the Kresge Foundation. In 2017, we held an institutional conference to consider all extra-curricular campus factors that affect student success. There is clearly a need to follow up on the outcomes of that conference. We have to think about steps to institutionalise this project across the board.

We have designed a number of programmes that were approved by competent authorities between 2017 and 2018, in preparation for the deadline of December 2019 when all our non-HEQSF aligned programmes will be discontinued. The new programmes include Advanced Certificates and Honours programmes that will be replacing our BTech qualifications, as well as new Masters and Doctoral degrees.

The reality of the 4th Industrial Revolution is changing the world of work. This forces any university that wants to remain relevant and responsive to revisit its philosophy of education. DUT or any university of technology for that matter, cannot continue to sell the hoax of educating and training for the world of work that hardly exists for so many of our graduates.

We are working closely with industry and other social partners in order to make sure we bequeath to society graduates that are competent, versatile and adaptable, creative and innovative, productive, and outcomes-focused and impactful. These will remain on our agenda of strategic conversations as we develop our strategic plan during the course of this year, and beyond.

DUT is currently having no less than 38 National Research Foundation (NRF) rated researchers, in a number of research fields; up from a low base of around 10 only a few years ago. Our Executive Deans and some heads of department themselves lead by example as research leaders. It is not surprising, therefore, that we were awarded the 2018 NRF Excelleration Award in recognition of improved research outputs. We also received various individual awards from a number of organisations.

As I pointed out earlier in reference to my inaugural address, our relevance and the quality of our engagement with society must be determined by the extent to which the knowledge we produce contributes to innovations that are needed to solve broader societal problems. Related to this point are mechanisms or platforms that should be in place to share new innovations with relevant stakeholders so that they know what potential solutions exist to address their problems, and exploit them. We will have to deliberate on such mechanisms or platforms and how they will be incorporated in the new Strategic Plan. But, already, as of 2018, entrepreneurial desks and innovation hubs have been established as part of our system of platforms; and, those of our students with entrepreneurial flair are hard at work in these.

My wish is that DUT should establish itself as the first port of call in this region when it comes to challenges of socio-economic development that require applied research, innovation and creativity. Durban, Pietermaritzburg and the entire KZN have many industries that we could support through teaching-learning and applied research-innovation. For this to be possible, we need a clear strategy that will help to produce more applied researchers and innovators that will see opportunity, including entrepreneurial ones, in all these industries and make our region a leading one in this country.

Ladies and gentlemen, it was, indeed, a proud moment when the DUT ENACTUS Chapter, a student organisation that focuses on innovation and entrepreneurship, was voted the overall winner in South Africa last year. It went on to represent the country internationally and came out among the top innovators in the world. There are many other similar achievements by our student associations and individual students we could present here were it not for the limited time we have. As these students have demonstrated, we need to harness our efforts and build on these great achievements by our students.

We will have to work on the strategy that institutionalises programmes that educate students by design, not by default and by osmosis, to act creatively, innovatively and entrepreneurially. This is the only way we will produce innovators and entrepreneurs that will be ready to participate in the economy productively as job creators. In turn, they will eventually help to salvage the regional and the national economy from the current shackles of doom.

I do not think that an annual target of 5 innovators/entrepreneurs in every 10 000 students enrolled - which just means 15 graduate innovators/entrepreneurs per year out of our 30 000 or so students - is too high a target. With some doggedness, requisite capacity and investment, we should be able to upscale ourselves to this level of outcomes and impact.

If the products of teaching-learning and applied research-innovation we produce as the people of DUT have relevance, are innovative or creative and demonstrate outcomes and impact in the broader society, greatness will undoubtedly be ours.

Conclusion

In all of the four interlocking sections above as presented using the 4Ps framework of **P**eople, **P**lans, **P**ennies and **P**roducts, I hope I have demonstrated that we are hard at work as the People of DUT: to transform and change; to develop and upscale our people, our plans, our resources and our products.

Our ambitions are high. Our resolve is unshakeable. We will get this DUT bus safely to its destination, despite all sorts of potholes and hijackers along the road. May be, in the near future, it will not just be a

DUT bus; but a DUT jet that so many from elsewhere will wish to fly in as they seek to reach their destinations of greatness even faster.

Chancellor, Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, let me take this opportunity to thank the Chancellor and members of Council under the wise and able leadership of Mr Wiseman Madinane for their guidance and support they always readily provide to management.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to members of Executive and Senior Management for their cooperation and dependability. I am greatly indebted to staff members and Unions for having warmed up to new ideas that both Council and Management are introducing. I also welcome their differing perspectives. After all, a university is about diversity of views and opinions. We win as a team if every view, from whatever quarter within our community, is supported by strong evidence irrespective of who the originator is; and without appealing to our basest primal instincts.

I also thank our students for allowing us space to think, innovate and implement what we believe will make them caring, competent, versatile, deliberative, empowering, nurturing, and productive people.

Finally, I thank all our external partners for believing in DUT, despite what they might hear or read from the media. Please become active participants in our journey to become the undisputed first port of call in this region in areas of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Thank you very much for being an attentive audience.

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