



The State of the University Address: SOUA2021

April 2021

Chancellor, Ms Nonkuleleko Nyembezi; Chairperson of Council, Mr Wiseman Madinane; Members of Council; Members of all our statutory structures; Members of Management; our staff and students; I greet you all.

When we introduced the idea and practice of the State of the University Address (SOUA) as an essential part of our planning cycle, we had not anticipated we would require a different medium to present it in 2021. The continued persistence of, arguably, the greatest human tragedy in our lifetime, Covid-19, has upended everything. It has forced us, sometimes kicking and screaming, into online modes of operation.

SOUA is by nature a synoptic extraction of high-level developments regarding the university's current state of affairs and its plans for the future. Deeper details of our institutional performance can always be viewed from our Institutional Performance against each year's Extended Annual Performance Plan (EAPP) and our annual reports posted on the DUT website.

Before I get to the business of this address, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the untimely passing away of some of our colleagues, students, and family members, too. Our souls, minds and bodies can no longer cope with the frequency with which we are losing our loved ones. To borrow from a world renowned South African author, Prof Zakes Mda, who, incidentally, is our 2021 recipient of our Honorary Doctorate from the Faculty of Arts and Design, Covid-19 has reminded us that *"our ways of living are, indeed, our ways of dying"*. We all face the ghastly prospects of decimation at all levels: family, workplaces and in our communities. In my welcome back message this year, I had this to say on these sorrowful experiences:

"We pray for strength and courage, mercy and grace, discernment and wisdom that families and friends, and indeed, colleagues and students who might have worked closely with the departed, could possibly be endowed with. We need these to understand and accept what transcends understanding and acceptance so we could soldier on. Further, we pray that the souls of our departed colleagues, students, friends and family rest in eternal peace."

When I delivered SOUA last year, I challenged all of us to imagine the desired state of affairs at DUT in 2030. *ENVISION2030* became our strategic compass towards our collective dream of a great university that will earn and cement its place and be recognised by its peers nationally, continentally and globally.

Before we delve into what we achieved in 2020 and what we will do in 2021 in pursuance of *ENVISION2030*, let me make a few comments about the painstaking implementation process Institutional Planning is engaged in.

As we seek to make DUT **D**ifferent, **U**pended and **T**ransformed, our approach to strategy development has been a relatively 'green-fields' one. Its orientation towards outcomes and impact is unashamedly bold and complex. The process of identifying relevant metrics and measures that are outcomes and impact-oriented, together with stretch targets predicated on appropriate baselines, has proved to be intellectually taxing, time consuming and, indeed, a painstaking exercise. We will continue with this important task in 2021, confident that using our own highly dedicated internal people and with some limited external expertise, we will be able to finalise it this year.

Needless to point out, none of us had anticipated the breakout of Covid-19 around the time Council adopted *ENVISION2030* in November 2019. For this reason, towards the end of 2020, we embarked on a scenario planning exercise. This is a huge exercise, hardly done in the university sector. It is, nevertheless, a well-established strategic planning exercise in a number of big multinational and national companies, and governments. We will also finalise this process this year.

Just for a bit of inspiration about vision, strategy and implementation plans, many organisations and countries in the world look at the wizardry of South Korea, Singapore, China and many other similarly successful economies. They do not only envision, identify appropriate scenarios and long-term plans, they implement them doggedly. DUT needs to take lessons from these in its implementation processes. I am fully aware that the achievement of our strategic objectives in *ENVISION2030* is no menial task. It requires total commitment and immersion of our people, bound together by our DNA, our values and principles, and doing things the DUT-Way.

With these broad introductory remarks, let us have a look at how we performed, and will continue to do so in 2021, in each of our twelve (12) Strategic Objectives (SOs) that make up four (4) *ENVISION2030* Perspectives, namely **Stewardship**, **Systems and Processes**, **Sustainability** and **Society**. The first two Perspectives are, collectively, the ‘*enabling and effecting*’ ones while the last two are, collectively, ‘*influencing and impacting*’.

STEWARDSHIP

In my 2020 address I explained what *Stewardship* is about. In the second semester of 2020, working closely with Institutional Planning, we produced and published videos in which we explain all the Perspectives and their constituent Strategic Objectives (SOs).

Just to recapitulate, *Stewardship* is about our People: the Right people, in the Right seats, playing their Rightful roles and taking responsibility and accountability in those roles. Extrinsically, it is about the transformation and change we must see in systems and processes at institutional level, and at individual level, behaviour and attitudes of our people. Intrinsically, it is about our people’s minds, souls and hearts. People, the Right people, are the fulcrum or the pivot of organisational growth, development, transformation and change. Those who are not Right, are misplaced, have confused roles and spell stagnation, under-development, stunted transformation and, potentially, the demise of DUT.

Stewardship is a stark reminder that good policies and strategies are inadequate if not supported by “*disciplined people, disciplined thought and disciplined action*” to borrow from Jim Collins. *Stewardship* reminds us that it is not just the efficacy and efficiency of our systems, processes and structures that will get us to the top and that it is not the positive bank balance that will deliver the state-of-the-art infrastructure we have committed to. Rather, it is how we embed and live our values and principles in what we do and how we do it that will anchor the Right people in their creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. To borrow, again, from Jim Collins, a combination of “*a culture of discipline and an ethic of entrepreneurship*”, and I would add, through innovation, produces “*the magical alchemy of great of performance*”.

We place a high premium on the Right people for we realise that if there is a preponderance of ill-disciplined people, ill-disciplined thought and ill-disciplined action, DUT will become a moribund organisation like many we read about. Through the three strategic objectives, namely **Institutional Culture**, **Lived Values** and **Creativity**, *Stewardship* is the most foundational and speaks to the core of our DNA. As one of our ‘enabling and effecting’ Perspectives, it is the bedrock of everything we seek to achieve by 2030.

Lived Values

The declaration of 2020 as Year-0 of *ENVISION2030*’s implementation meant that we would focus on a number of its building blocks. ‘*Values and principles*’ sit as connectors of our two DNA strands, namely ‘*people-centred and engaged*’ and ‘*innovative and entrepreneurial*’.

The tried and tested, and internationally acclaimed, ‘*Living Values Methodology*’ was used to cascade values- and principle-based conversations in August 2020, commencing with the Vice-Chancellor and his direct reports, and on to the next level of line management. Human Resources continued to conduct these conversations at different levels of the university, including incorporating them in our staff induction programmes. Evidence so far indicates great commitment and enthusiasm at least among those who have participated in these conversations.

The process of embedding and living our values and principles is a long term one; with lead and lag impacts we should appreciate as we walk this path to greatness. This year, we will continue with this process. Further, we will ensure there are appropriate and specially designed surveys that test how well we are traversing this new path.

To end this sub-section, there is a special way some DUT people demonstrated how they actually already live our values and principles. A number heeded the call and contributed to the *DUT Solidarity Fund: Committed and Compassionate* we set up last year to assist those adversely affected by the effects of Covid-19. The selflessness with which we responded gave meaning to the old African adage: “*Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu*”. BaSotho would say: “*Matsoho a hlatswana*”, literally meaning that hands wash each other. Both of these conjure up the important notion of human interdependence.

Institutional Culture: the DUT-Way

Institutional culture is a function of values and principles, habits and behaviours, that get embedded in the hearts, souls and minds of our people until they are second to nature. It will always lag behind and its impact will be realised more fully in the future. However, ‘transient impacts’ along the way are beginning to show.

The numbers of people who have been exposed to our ‘Living Values’ conversations and their opinions on them indicate that many of our people are aligning their hearts, souls and minds with new ways of doing things at DUT we now call the DUT-Way. It is my hope that in 2021 more of our people will embrace *ENVISION2030* on their own accord. It is also my hope that those charged with the responsibility to facilitate necessary engagements and ensure that a common understanding by all is reached and expectations are managed, will continue to do so.

As mentioned above, achieving the goals and objectives of *ENVISION2030* requires people, the Right people. Recruitment of staff should not be seen as a mechanical task; but, a strategic one of appointing the Right people, into the Right seats that are ready to, and will, perform their roles Right. Online recruitment, though unparalleled and hugely successful in 2020 as you will read below, was met with inertia from some of our stakeholders, betraying their resistance to change.

One of the decisions Management took when we initiated the institutional review exercise was to prioritise recruitment and appointment of senior directors and directors in various units. Covid-19 regulations, notwithstanding, for the first time our turn-around recruitment process averaged less than 40 days. Strategic and senior appointments such as that of DVC: Teaching and Learning, Executive Deans: Management Sciences and Engineering and Built Sciences, Chief Financial Officer, Director: Procurement, Director: Protection Services, Director: ITSS, Director: Technology Transfer and Innovation and Director: Research and Postgraduate Support amongst others were made last year. At the beginning of this year, we finalised the appointments of the Executive Dean: Health Sciences and Director: Centre for Quality Promotion and Assurance. Sadly, there has been organized inertia against this process, leading to strained relations among some stakeholders, again, betraying their resistance to change.

All these appointments were made in line with our transformation plan and our equity targets. At least seven (7) of the positions I mentioned here are occupied by highly qualified, highly skilled and experienced, and competent African females. Starting with the first quarter of 2021, we will begin to pay special attention to transformation and equity issues at departmental and unit levels, while at the same time analyzing the skills set in order to inform appropriate interventions guided by our skills development plan.

We cannot hope to be a university worth its name, let alone a leading university, when about 95 of our lecturers do not have the minimum of a Master's degree. A process was initiated in earnest last year to ensure every lecturer has at least a Master's degree. We should actually be ashamed that we still hanker after a Master's degree when other universities in the world, not even leading ones, require a doctorate as a minimum. Sadly, again, there has been organised inertia against this process; which has led to strained relations among some stakeholders, betraying their resistance not only to change, but excellence.

This year, we will continue to cascade conversations and engagements to ensure that we embed *ENVISION2030* across the university and usher in the DUT-Way. We will spend the year implementing interventions that foster an institutional culture of discipline that will institutionalise value- and principled-based governance, management and administration.

Several advancements that demonstrate the DUT-Way were made in 2020. In the support services area, many systems that embed ethical behaviour and accord clearer responsibility and accountability emerged in governance, management and administration. For example, in procurement and ICT; which have been part of the soft underbelly of our system, new online systems have been introduced that radically change our institutional culture.

All of the above have set new yardsticks and raised the bar about what it means to be a DUT academic or support staff member, what our expectations are, what behaviour and attitudes are most appropriate, what responsibility and accountability each of the members of our community has. The DUT-Way is only unclear and opaque to those who are resistant to change. To the international community, it is crystal clear, given national and international awards we have earned, especially, since September 2020.

Creativity as a way of life

One of the two strands of DUT's DNA is about being '*innovative and entrepreneurial*'. The source of these two elements is creativity. The concept of creativity, and in turn, the ethos of innovation and entrepreneurship are what we worked hard in 2020 to foster in various ways.

We have begun to build the foundations of DUT's unique philosophy of education embedded in creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Divergent and Design Thinking will be fostered through the Universal Design Learning (UDL) framework; which undergirds teaching-learning approaches like Project Based Learning (PBL), Problem Based Learning and Design. By the end of 2020, we had already trained 54 of our lecturers in PBL on the train-the-trainer basis, with the help of a professor from the Munich University of Applied Sciences. More of these innovative approaches will be introduced in our system. Senate approved a position paper at its first meeting of 2021 in this respect.

During the height of Covid-19, the spirit of innovation shone through vividly when our people - academics, researchers and students - used our facilities, laboratories and equipment to produce PPEs for ourselves and the provincial health sector, including masks and sanitisers. As long as Covid-19 persists, they will continue to produce as much as they can; taking into consideration our primary function in teaching-learning and research-innovation. In the administrative sector, we have used the DUT App Factory to digitalise some of our systems – HR, Finance, Procurement and in many other areas.

Together with our quad-helix partners - in the private sector, government departments and agencies - we have funded a number of innovation and entrepreneurship projects and produced relevant policies, procedures and structures for this purpose. The Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship is, but, one of the structures approved in 2020 that will house all our projects and activities in this regard, including our entrepreneurship desks in Durban and in the Midlands.

With so much already achieved so far in these areas, even by our own students winning national prizes, we are not just talking about creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship; but, demonstrating and living it. The year 2021 should see more advancements as we make creativity our way of life.

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

If people are the fulcrum of organizational growth and development, what then becomes the role of systems and processes? It is important to highlight that any organisation is more than the total sum of its people. Over and above the people, their thoughts, their behaviour, attitudes and the culture they spawn through formal and informal rules they create, systems and processes complete the makeup or architecture of an organisation.

As I said last year, systems and processes are the heartbeat of any organisation:

“Birthed out of creativity and innovation, Systems and Processes help to assure individual and institutional responsibility and accountability. They help us to manage our scant resources; develop and nurture our people; improve the rigour of what works; detect and discern risks. On the basis of what they churn out, we are able to implement corrective action aimed at safeguarding the achievement of our strategic objectives.”

Systems and processes are brought to life by the Right people and enhanced by the Right structures where the Right people play their roles Right.

Our Performance Management System (PerMS) was never designed to punish anyone. As noted earlier, it is Jim Collin’s “*magical alchemy of great of performance*” that we seek to infuse and imbue in all of us. PerMS is a tool used to ensure there is alignment and a strong value-chain between institutional and individual objectives/tasks on the one hand, and calculated performance on them, on the other hand. We subscribe to what is now a well-accepted notion across the world to the effect that what you do not properly conceptualise and plan for, and worse, what you cannot measure, cannot be administered and managed optimally, if at all. To ensure this strong value-chain is in place, training and development appropriate to what needs to be achieved would then be provided to individuals. As with the recruitment process and academics without Master’s degrees, there is great inertia against PerMS among some stakeholders, again, betraying their resistance to accountability, excellence and many of our values and principles.

Cognisant of the need for change management and for improvement in stakeholder relations, Management initiated a relations building exercise starting in November 2019 and for a total of 8 months in 2020. Sadly, the very stakeholders abandoned this exercise in August 2020 after much work had been done. Management will continue during the course of 2021 to provide opportunities to find one another on these important transformative projects.

Organisational performance does not start and end with people, the Right people. As noted just above, it also requires optimal structures, systems and processes within which people will operate. Even though the phrase, ‘*structure follows strategy*’ may sound hackneyed, it is still very much appropriate for us. In 2019, while we initially started with HR, Procurement, Real Estate and Student Services in order to address urgencies of the time, we also focused on Finance, Institutional Planning and the three portfolios of Teaching and Learning, People and Operations as well as Research, Innovation and Engagement. Further, we are also looking at the organisation of our Midlands Campuses and the extent to which they could contribute even more towards in pursuit of *ENVISION2030*.

Together with the *Stewardship, Systems and Processes* is our ‘*enabling and effecting*’ Perspective upon which rests our collective capacity to achieve our ultimate goal of improving the lives and livelihoods of our people and our broader society. *ENVISION2030* identifies three Strategic Objectives under the *Systems and Processes* Perspective, namely ***Innovative Curricula and Research***, the ***Digital Environment*** and the ***State-of-the-art Infrastructure***.

Innovative Curricula and Research

Our ultimate goal of improving the lives and livelihoods of our broader society hinges strongly on our ability to produce novel knowledge and high level skills that will spur creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship on. It is only with evidence-based decision-making, innovation and entrepreneurship that the wellbeing of our people and communities could improve.

At the beginning of 2020, we received a research output report that indicates that DUT's per capita performance is at the top of Universities of Technology (UoTs), having surpassed TUT and CPUT. Our weighted research per capita ratio of 1:11 is well above the DHET-set norm of 0.565 for the UoT sector. We are also among leading universities in terms of student success rates. For the past 5 years, DUT has been performing above the national norm in area of student throughput.

It is no wonder then that in September 2020, *Times Higher Education University World Rankings* announced that DUT had been ranked in the top 500 universities in the world, top 10 in the world on citations (of our research) and among the top 5 of South African universities. This is, but, one measure of demonstrating the relevance, use and impact of the knowledge produced by our researchers. But, how do we, ourselves, use such research as we implement our curricula? Beyond citations, the next step is to ensure that the knowledge we produce or produced elsewhere strategically positions us as the first port of call for innovative solutions our localities and region seek. We seek to lead when it comes to creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, as we have already started to do.

In 2020, we made considerable improvement in getting our new programs accredited by the Council on Higher Education. In our pursuit of innovative curricula, we made efforts to partner with industry to ensure that the content of our offerings is informed by real needs and demands. In 2020, we reviewed a number of our programmes and developed new ones to align to the HEQSF and our decolonisation toolkit. We are aware of the need to continually work on the quality of our programmes so that they produce the adaptive graduate we want to bequeath to the broader society.

In our deliberate effort to build a 'glocal' university, we launched and implemented Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) in November 2020 with 15 projects across our faculties. This launch earned us a prestigious award from the Association of International Education of Administrators (AIEA). DUT is the recipient of the 2021 *Global Award for Innovation and Excellence in Internationalisation*. This is yet another pioneering feat as we become the first African university to receive such an honour.

We have a number of students taking part in national and international extracurricular activities. For example, two hundred and fifty (250) of our students participated in the Young Leaders Academy that we organised jointly with the IQRAA Trust. Twenty (20) students graduated from the ICON Leadership Program organised in partnership with ACCORD and WESSA.

DUT launched community engagement pitching and showcase awards for students and staff that profile the type of work being done in collaboration with quad-helix partners. Our partners formed part of the evaluation panels and were able to attend the virtual presentations and assess projects. The feedback and impact of these projects and initiatives were very welcomed by our partners. Plans for 2021 are in place.

It has been some time since we started talks about introducing the Master of Business Administration (MBA) in our program suite. Finally, we are ready to offer our MBA Programme with effect from 1 July 2021.

Digital Environment

There are two major sub-objectives we are pursuing in this respect, namely agile, efficient and effective ways of learning and working and, in turn, optimised service delivery.

Our core functions of teaching-learning and research-innovation were, arguably, the hardest hit by Covid-19 and the consequent lockdown measures. Adaptability, flexibility, the resilience of our people and the immediate uptake of digitalisation ensured business continuity. The number of online teaching-learning engagements, meetings, conversations and workshops conducted across the University suggests there is an alternative to conducting our engagements not only in the midst of Covid-19; but, for more agility, efficiency and effectiveness into the future.

Last year we introduced a single registration system for both semesters. It proceeded smoothly despite trepidations of some student leaders that digital registration had been doomed to fail. In preparation for 2021 registrations, successful innovations in our processes were implemented.

We acknowledge some challenges with the online registration process experienced by students this year for many reasons, including a lack of readiness by many first time entering (FTEN) students. Online registration by returning students proceeded with hardly any major challenge. In response to these challenges, FTEN students experienced, on-campus online registration support centres were established. These were supposed to be accessible only to those FTEN students who would have been granted permits, accordingly. It is just unfortunate that on 23 March 2021 and again on 6 April 2021 some people invaded the main on-campus online registration centre demanding to be registered; uninvited and without following our Covid-19 health and safety protocols.

As mentioned earlier, a number of digital sub-systems have been implemented in various portfolios including Finance, Procurement, HR, Teaching-Learning, Research-Innovation, and so forth. For example, a new DUT data warehouse was implemented in 2020. PowerHEDA, a management information system, and AutoScholar, a data analytics system used to track student performance, were also implemented in 2020. As part of these IT related developments, we will also introduce an electronic security system this year.

One of the biggest milestones last year was to conduct SRC elections online for the first time in the history of DUT after some years of negotiation. Ironically, thanks to Covid-19; which facilitated to finality what had been a protracted process. The elections were a resounding success, with increased student participation. This is a welcome development, auguring well for the health and maturity of democratic practice at the University.

Disruptive though Covid-19 has been, it has certainly catapulted us into the digital age. There is certainly no turning back from our new mode of teaching-learning and work. To stabilise our digital environment, a new Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP) platform and system, that will integrate all of the sub-systems, will be

introduced during the course of 2021.

All of the above, have been and will be possible because of considerable investment the University has made to support the digitalisation process that ultimately creates a unique digital environment at DUT.

State-of-the-art infrastructure

The framework for DUT's infrastructure development is the Long-Term Spatial Plan 2020-2040 approved by Council in 2019.

The concept of state-of-the-art infrastructure involves creating learning, working and living spaces that are interactive, dynamic, shared and that foster collaboration. Such spaces will also imbue a yearning for education, creativity, imagination, interaction and experimentation. In addition to everything these spaces will afford us, they will also serve as crucibles for lasting social moments to be treasured into the future.

When the year 2020 started, two new projects, namely, the engineering building at Indumiso Campus and student administration and leisure facilities at Steve Biko Campus were at their early stages of implementation. With delays associated with Covid-19, our engineering building could not be completed in time for registrations in 2021. This is only a temporary setback in our FTEN student enrolment and the proportion of our Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) offerings.

The national lockdown also delayed the start of new multi-million rand projects such as the new administration building, the arts and design building, new lecture halls and the innovation hub. This is just the first phase of implementation of a number of projects approved by Council in 2019. The process of conceptualisation and design of these projects could only start towards the end of 2020. Most of our multi-million rand refurbishments, of student residences for example, whose conception and planning date back a number of years ago have been fast-tracked, with most of them to be completed by July 2021.

Finally, there is some movement regarding the Imbali Education and Innovation Precinct in the Midlands after some protracted delays dating back to 2014 when the concept was mooted by our Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande. The purchase of the old Transnet building, called Imbali Lodge, adjacent to Indumiso Campus was finalised in 2020. It is the first acquisition in the process of establishing the precinct. More proposals have been submitted to DHET and other potential funders to grow this precinct further.

Even though special funds were set aside in 2019, we did not move fast enough in improving the safety and protection of our people. By the end of 2021, and as noted above, we will be introducing an electronic security system that will not only rely on warm bodies; but the best available technology in this field. The university's fleet management system is outdated and runs largely devoid of accountability on the usage of our vehicles. More importantly, it puts the lives of our people at great risk, with many cars that should long have been retired continuing to be used. This system will also be introduced this year.

SUSTAINABILITY

The first two Perspectives we dealt with earlier are ‘*enabling and effecting*’ and are the building blocks of our capacity to deliver on our ultimate goal of contributing to the lives and livelihoods of the broader society. The last two, namely *Sustainability* and *Society* are ‘*influencing and impacting*’ and are designed to demonstrate to the broader society the products of our toils, and impacts thereof.

I have spoken consistently about the importance of acting responsibly with the intention to guard DUT jealously as a public university. Like other universities, DUT has a mandate not only to serve the current members of society, but to contribute to the development needs of future generations, too. It is for this reason that we approach the principle and practice of development holistically, as defined by the United Nation’s Bruntland Report (1987):

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

DUT people have individual and collective responsibility to ensure that the values and principles we live by, as well as the systems and processes we design and implement keep DUT sustainable. A pre-condition for reaching our overarching and ultimate goal of improving the lives and livelihoods of our people and the broader society is that we must contribute towards transforming societies and economies, first and foremost in our localities and in our region. Economies are the base from which livelihoods rest.

For this reason, we understand the concept of sustainability to speak holistically to the **Economy, Environment and Equity**, as many other organisations across the world do. In the context of *ENVISION2030*, we address these three foundational aspects of sustainability through three interconnected strategic objectives, namely ***Distinctive Education, Financial Sustainability and Green Ecosystems***, which address equity, economy, and environment, respectively.

Distinctive Education

Distinctive education requires that beyond our ‘*innovative curricula and research*’, we must provide a holistic framework for the education we offer. Such a framework must incorporate knowledge acquisition and generation, teaching-learning approaches and extra-curricular programmes. Ultimately, our unique, distinctive and holistic education will attract quality people – staff and students – who will join DUT by design and not by default or as mere convenience. It will also attract quality quad-helix partners with whom we will build and share our creativity and innovations, and our entrepreneurial flair, too, for the benefit of our broader society.

A number of advancements in our ‘*innovative curricula and research*’ that focus on teaching-learning and research-innovation are reported in a previous section. They all add great value to our ‘*distinctive education*’.

At the 11 March 2021 Senate meeting, a discussion paper was presented which promises to radically change DUT’s philosophy of education to one that fosters creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, and produce adaptive graduates. The Universal Design Learning (UDL) framework will undergird teaching and learning approaches like Project Based Learning (PBL), Problem Based Learning and Design Thinking. As mentioned

earlier, by the end of 2020, we had already trained 54 of our lecturers in PBL on the train-the-trainer basis, with the help of a professor from the Munich University of Applied Sciences. More of these innovative approaches will be introduced in our system in 2021.

In recognition of the fact that our distinctiveness is inextricably linked to the knowledge, intellectual capacity and skill sets of our primary people – staff and students – we have introduced a number of capacity building projects some of which are funded by DHET; for example, the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP), the Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme (NESP), New Generation of Academics Programmes (nGAP), and the internally funded Hlomisa Academy. The latter includes younger members of staff who are not academics.

Securing the second grant from the Kresge Foundation to support our efforts aimed at increasing student success and improve student experience at DUT is part of our strategy to ensure that the quality and success of our students improve. We will use the grant to focus on three elements of *Siyaphumelela 2.0*, namely Holistic Student Support, Moving the Middle and Building a Data Culture. Student Services, the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CELTE) and Institutional Planning are the custodians of this grant. As noted earlier, our success and throughput rates have improved partly as a result of interventions like these.

Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability has to do with our different income streams, strategic deployment and/or allocation of resources, as well as prudent and frugal expenditure. A deteriorating South African economy, exacerbated by Covid-19, is significantly threatening the financial sustainability of many institutions.

The University's size and shape are important factors of our major income stream, the block grant. *ENVISION2030* implores us to maximise and diversify our income streams, keep an equitable balance among them, and employ our resources efficiently and effectively. While many projects and activities have been introduced in this respect, we will increase the tempo in 2021 and beyond. Based on baselines already established, measures and targets will be developed as part of our implementation plan. We will slog away to meet our targets, despite all the difficult circumstances.

In August 2020, we finalized a robust Resource Allocation Model (RAM). This model is by far the most comprehensive RAM that gives the cost drivers and distribution factors at such a level of detail that DUT is now able to calculate more objectively the cost of tuition per student per module. The model, which will have to be updated annually with the latest accounting numbers, provides for a detailed analysis of the annual financial performance of every operational unit (OU). Beyond RAM, we have various strategic financial management parameters we use to ensure our allocations to various sets of activities are equitable.

Covid-19 tested our agility as an organisation. As a result, we had to re-prioritise and re-adjust our 2020 budget to accommodate the shifting sands of our economy and income on the one hand, and new Covid-19 related demands on the other hand.

Even though there were delays in the audit of our Annual Financial Statements (AFS), the University received an unqualified (clean) audit opinion from our external auditors. This shows that in a country where so many

government departments and agencies fail dismally, DUT is succeeding. There remain, however, many control and accounting challenges as a result of a largely manual financial system and other unconscionable practices the DUT system has entailed for many years. Despite all these challenges, most of our financial ratios point to a very healthy and sustainable financial position.

As mentioned earlier, many more sub-systems and processes have migrated to digital platforms in line with our ICT strategy. We are confident this will help to reduce control and accounting challenges and the number of audit findings in these areas. Again, as noted earlier, Finance will be prioritised in 2021 when a new ERP referred to under *Digital Environment* above is implemented.

Green Ecosystems

As noted above *Green Ecosystems* is about environmental sustainability and our responsibility to the environment. In so many ways, this is a relatively new area of strategic focus for DUT, at least in its organisation.

We have completed the Green Building Audit of all our buildings in order to ascertain and confirm requirements. We are taking these in chunks and incorporating retrofitting in our maintenance projects. The biggest rollout will be in S-Block renovations we are currently busy with. The Solar Panel Project at the Steve Biko Library roof top is now complete and will be expanded to Indumiso Campus, Ritson Campus and S-Block at Steve Biko Campus; while the Water Harvesting Project from the boreholes is currently underway and should be completed in 2021. The water will be stored and used for irrigation at Steve Biko and Ritson Campuses. We are conducting tests to explore possibilities for human consumption. Inspired by our spirit of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, we are conducting a feasibility study for manufacturing and testing of solar panels which could service more of our people in our localities and in the broader region.

Despite no targets having been set for 2020, we had substantial savings in terms of printing and paper utilisation. We must also accept that Covid-19 restrictions may have had an effect on this.

SOCIETY

In my attempt to expatiate on *ENVISION2030* last year through a series of video messages we shared with our DUT people, I said the following, amongst others, with respect to the *Society*:

*“Arguably, of the four perspectives, **Society** is the most aspirational. While the others may represent the archer’s arrows, this perspective embodies the archer’s aim. By achieving the nine strategic objectives that underpin the other three perspectives and realising the remaining three that constitute the perspective, **Society** it is hoped that we will have demonstrably manifested our commitment to impact the lives and livelihoods of our people, both internal and external, locally and globally. And that in so doing, the collective impact of our accomplishments will reverberate across the various components of Society.”*

As is clear from the statement above, this Perspective encapsulates our *raison d'être* as a societal institution. It is the second of our ‘*influencing and impacting*’ Perspectives. It focuses on DUT being on course to make its unique and impactful contribution towards ‘*improving the lives and livelihoods*’ of the broader society. In this respect, there are three strategic objectives, namely ***Engaged University, Innovative and Entrepreneurial,***

and **Adaptive Graduates**.

Engaged University

Our framework for engagement with the broader society is predicated on local, regional, national and global imperatives. Documents such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Africa's Agenda 2063, South Africa's National Development Plan, regional, and local growth and development plans contain such imperatives. Given that we are a university, first and foremost, it's the teaching-learning and the research-innovation programmes and initiatives that will be the basis of our engagements with all our quad-helix organs of our broader society.

In our quest to contribute towards 'transforming societies and economies' as referred to earlier, we have established partnerships that embed our work in our localities and in our region, first and foremost. In the area of research-innovation, for example, we have realigned and also introduced a number of research-innovation focus areas to SDGs and other imperatives in the rest of the important documents mentioned above.

Even though DUT's academic focus is less pronounced in the fields of social sciences and humanities, we, nevertheless, make waves in those fields. Our Urban Futures Centre has been awarded the inaugural team award in the *2020/21 HSRC-USAF Medal in Social Sciences and Humanities*. This award shows the phenomenal work related to Covid-19 that the team has been engaged in with the homeless and drug addicts. The Gender Justice, Health and Human Development Focus has been successfully awarded the (Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Practice) GRRIPP Award as part of a UK network of Universities led by the University College London. This is another first for DUT demonstrating how we continue to transform our society.

Another example of a regional partnership is one among DUT, Agribusiness Development Agency and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) that saw us launch the Agricultural Hub in the Midlands in February 2021. EDTEA has committed start-up funds towards this initiative and has proposed a long-term partnership beyond 3 years. We are exploring ways in which phase 2 of the Hub could be funded.

Transforming economies requires people who are well-trained and geared to innovate and be entrepreneurial. To this end, in 2020, we offered entrepreneurship training to 1500 students as well as 1908 community members in partnership with the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA). At least 90 student SMMEs out of 1500 were supported as part of DUT Entrepreneurship Programme with 12 trademarks to be registered soon. These interventions have contributed to the creation of 170 full time jobs and 25 part time jobs, which surpassed the SEDA reporting targets.

With substantial support from our innovation and entrepreneurship programmes, our Enactus team, a student organisation amongst many successful ones, has cemented its leadership, influence and impact, not only in South Africa, but globally, too. In the field of innovation and entrepreneurship, we have been consulted to participate in important conversations such as *African Technology through Entrepreneurship* and the UNESCO-UNEVOC network on themes such as inclusion, creativity and sustainable development.

Further, at the international level, a number of entities have also been established by DUT itself and some in partnership with other international universities and organisations. These include the Luban Workshop established in partnership with the Tianjin Vocational Institute in China. With its 3D printing technology, this workshop continues to assist in the production of PPE's. In the course of 2021, with the generous contribution of the Chinese International Education Foundation and the Confucius Institute, an Innovation Hub will be established.

We believe these are some of the interventions and achievements that have earned us yet another Top 100 ranking from the *Times Higher Education Emerging Economies Rankings 2021* from countries classified by the London Stock Exchange's FTSE Group as advanced emerging, secondary emerging or frontier. DUT has been ranked 90th in this instance.

We received further accolades between 2020 and the beginning of 2021. DUT was ranked 43rd in the *Ethical Value* category of the *World Universities with Real Impact (WURI)* rankings, being the only South African university to be ranked in this category. As mentioned earlier under '*Innovative Curricula*', DUT received the *2021 Global Award for Innovation and Excellence in Internationalization*, an award by the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA). This is the first time such an award has been given to a university outside the U.S.A.

All of these awards are in addition to the September 2020 announcement by *Times Higher Education's World University Rankings for 2021*; which ranked DUT 10th in the world on citations and 5th in South Africa. Without doubt, *ENVISION2030* is firmly in motion and is making waves around the world.

Innovative and Entrepreneurial

This strategic objective demonstrates the interconnectedness of our strategic objectives, running from the first Perspective to this one. There is a thread of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship that pulls from our DNA and the DUT-Way, through our '*innovative curricula and research*', for example, and to this particular strategic objective. In short, the intrinsic character our DNA imbues in us, the choices we make in our curricula and research, must bequeath value to, and transform, our societies and their economies, through deep and meaningful engagement with our quad-helix partners. In this regard, our propensity for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship would be the bedrock of these engagements.

This strategic objective is, thus, about what outcomes and impacts could demonstrably be realised and observed in the lives and livelihoods of the broader society. Above, we refer to many of our initiatives by our people - students, staff and alumni – in this regard. If all our being and approaches to our work were aligned accordingly, national and international recognition, as referred to above, become natural outcomes of our efforts.

As pointed out several times earlier, we have incontrovertible evidence now of what we call 'transient impacts' we can point to even before we have reached our 2030 destination. If we focus on doing things not just for their own sake, but for outcomes and impact, we will certainly be the great university we hope to be in 2030 and beyond.

Adaptive Graduates

As noted above, everything we do at DUT must ultimately contribute towards improving the lives and livelihoods of the broader society. Our DNA, the DUT-Way and the values and principles these are predicated on will help us to bequeath unique cohorts of graduates to the broader society. Our *Innovative Curricula and Research*, our *Distinctive Education* which are undergirded by our *state-of-the-art infrastructure*, will bequeath graduates imbued with creativity, innovation and an entrepreneurial flair that will be the basis of their contributions to society. They will have the acumen to respond to, and initiate, change for the greater public good; which will make them the *Adaptive Graduates* we plan to produce. References to accolades and achievements made above are full of our students' hand and footprints in them. Their lifelong journey will be sustained as equal partners in Society, with Society and for Society.

CONCLUSION

A few years ago, I used the analogy of the bus as our mode of transport to our destination of choice: greatness. I used to point to the fact that roads differ in quality and design. Some parts are flat, others have steep inclines, and others have sharp curves. In addition to these inherent properties, a number of South African roads will also require a motorist to be alert to potholes, animals and all sorts of hurdles that may arise from sporadic community protests. We have a responsibility to navigate these hurdles without losing sight of our collective desire to reach our destination and achieve the impact we will and must make.

Buttressed by a number of successes registered so consistently since 2018, I suggested then that we had already upgraded to a jet. Success continued and became more pronounced. One of our colleagues then suggested more recently that we are now in a spacecraft to uncharted space where most will never ever be.

Arguably, once known as the 'Protest Capital' of the South African Higher Education sector, we are now respected for our soaring outcomes and impacts in teaching-learning, research-innovation and societal engagement. Examples provided above attest to how a university or any organisation for that matter, could, within a relatively short space of time, turn its fortunes around and begin to be respected for what its essence is rather than ephemeral weaknesses it has or distractions it faces from time to time.

I make an appeal to all of us to stay the course in 2021 and play our part to make DUT a great university.

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ENVISION2030

fairness • professionalism • commitment • compassion • excellence
transparency • honesty • integrity • respect • accountability