

# VC's VOICE

## ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

### Student success, entrepreneurship and employability

It is a privilege to lead a university recognised for its role in widening access to higher education studies for many students who may not otherwise have had this opportunity. Many are the first in their families to obtain a university qualification.

The success of our students depends on so many different factors, not least of which is the collective efforts of all our staff, both academic and PASS (Professional, Administrative and Support Services), who work tirelessly to ensure the smooth implementation of all academic programmes and operational services across our seven campuses.

This is reflected in the findings of the latest South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE), which indicated that Nelson Mandela University obtained the highest ranking in South Africa for providing a supportive learning environment for students.

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#### Supportive learning environment

Access to funding is a further important determinant for student access and success. In 2018, with the increase in student numbers, 83% of our students received some form of financial aid, compared to 69% in 2017. Through the expanded NSFAS bursary scheme, our university has significantly increased the number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are able to study further.

It is encouraging to see that there has been an increase in the total number of graduates in all our faculties. Our autumn graduation this year

was a joyous period over two weeks, with 16 graduation ceremonies, when 7407 under- and postgraduate qualifications were awarded, compared to 6938 in 2018. This is an increase of 6.7%. Overall, our graduate numbers have grown at a higher rate (5.8%) relative to our enrolments (2.8%).

#### Job creation and entrepreneurial mindset

Job creation is front of mind for all South Africans. Faced with a youth unemployment rate of 55.2%, we feel it is essential to track whether our graduates are employable. To this end, since 2011 we have administered a Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS) every two years. In 2017, just over half (52.1%) of the survey respondents were employed at the time of graduation, with 78.1% indicating that they were placed in a job related to their qualification and 80% employed in the Eastern Cape. Of those not in paid employment, 14% were looking for work, while just over a third (33%) were studying further.

In light of the high youth unemployment rate in our country, it is incumbent upon us to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset in our graduates. Our university is recognised as one of the leading institutions in promoting student entrepreneurship. A student entrepreneurship programme has been established and this is aligned with the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) programme, initiated by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). This was possible through a collaboration between our Business School, Student Governance and Development, and Institutional Support.

The DHET established the Student Entrepreneurs National Forum and the chairperson is one of our students, while the national convener of the Student Entrepreneurs Community of Practice is one of our staff members. Under their capable

leadership, the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Programme and Universities South Africa (USAF) requested that our university host the launch of National Entrepreneurship Week on 1 August 2019.

#### Proactive about the 4IR

Across all faculties, we are introducing a range of new programmes and teaching facilities that enhance qualification relevance, employability and entrepreneurship of our students in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The 4IR requires of us to proactively inquire what this means for our curricula in terms of how to prepare graduates to navigate the future world of work and society; and how to utilise rapidly evolving technologies to enhance teaching and learning.

**Significant strides have been made this year in providing students with access to computers and the internet through WiFi coverage in all lecture venues, the creation of WiFi lounges and the refurbishment of computer labs.**

#### e-readiness programme

As part of our e-readiness programme, 40 lecture venues across our campuses have been upgraded to enable visual and audio presentations, video conferencing and wireless connectivity to projectors. Procurement of mobile recording studio kits has commenced, which will make it possible for video recordings of lectures to be done from an academic's office or lecture venue.

Statistics on the use of the university's Learning Management System (Moodle) indicate that online platforms continue to gain increased usage.

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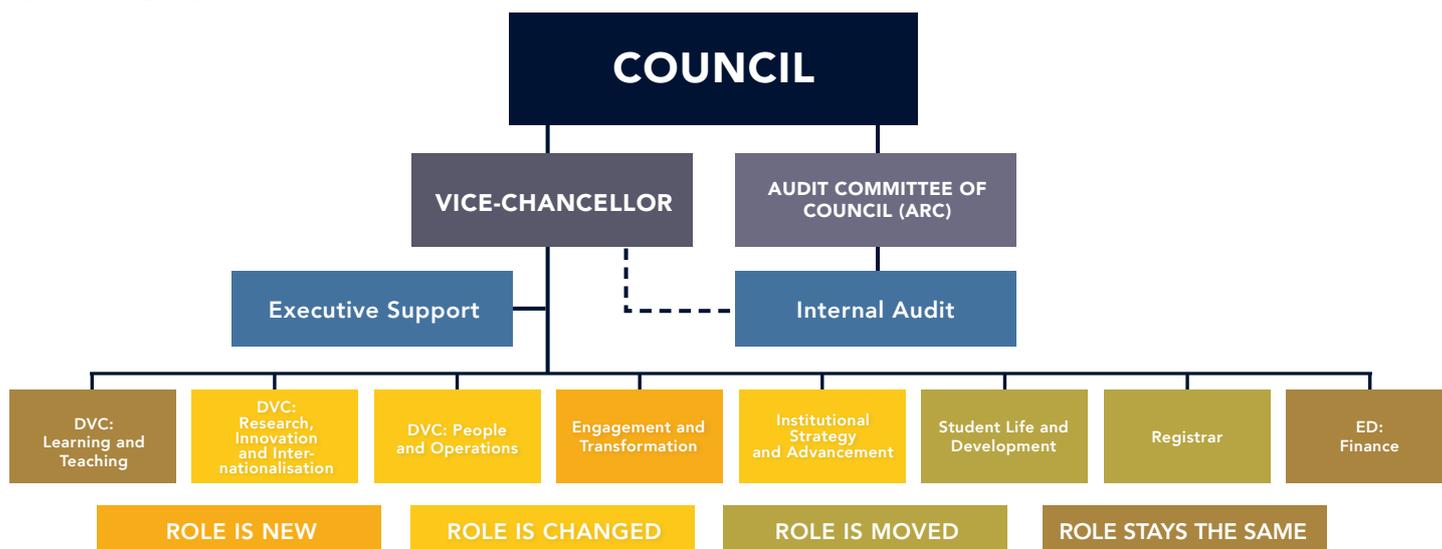


## THE FUTURE...

An architectural impression of the new 198-bed student residence at George Campus that is scheduled to accept students from 2021.

For further infrastructure developments at George Campus, see page 4.

# VC's MACRO-LEVEL ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN CHANGES MADE



The first changes in the Organisational Redesign project – created to ensure that the university is in a better position to embrace a rapidly changing environment - have been approved.

The macrostructure proposals, with realignment of portfolios as part of the pilot project for the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and her direct reports, were approved by Council on 21 June.

The Council also approved, in principle, the high-level proposals emerging from the planning phase of the organisational redesign process for the faculties and PASS portfolios.

For full details of the initial changes, go to the Case for Change website:

<https://staff.mandela.ac.za/Portal-Pages/Case-for-Change>

During this quarter, the process will cascade from senior to middle management and operational levels to facilitate the co-creation of future-focused organisational redesign proposals for every faculty and PASS division.

The parties will co-create these proposals through workshops as a basis for consultation for recommendation to Council in September.

## ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

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The software solution Zoom enables easy video conferencing and has an automated cloud recording and automatic transcription capability, which can plug into Moodle.

We are confident that our reinvention of student development and success interventions through the organisational redesign process currently underway will increase our overall student success rate, which, despite the increase in our graduation numbers, has declined by about 4% from 2016 to 2018. This can be attributed to a number of factors, including the increase in students coming from schools in socio-economically disadvantaged environments, and the late registration of students due to NSFAS related challenges, resulting in them missing out on the first few weeks of lectures at the beginning of the academic year.

### Enhanced student success interventions

As part of our initiative to enhance student success interventions, we piloted the introduction of academic advisors/success coaches in the faculties of EBEIT and Law in 2018. These were the only two faculties where the retention rate of first-year students increased (by 2% and 7% respectively). This addition to the suite of interventions to foster a supportive learning environment shows much promise.

Various other interventions to promote student success include the provision of a range of peer-led learning opportunities such as Supplemental Instruction (SI), tutoring and mentoring (increasingly using a blended approach) with an emphasis on the availability of digital resources, and facilitated online

group discussions. Increasing emphasis is also placed on writing and reading development and multilingualism to enhance learning and academic success.

### Enhanced staff opportunities and ratios

Ongoing development opportunities are also provided to academic staff to enhance their teaching practice and to actively engage students in learning. For example, in 2018, we piloted the reimagined induction programme (now referred to as Beginning Your Journey - BYJ @ Mandela University), which was attended by 75 new academics from all faculties. Teaching enhancement workshops and consultations are provided for academic staff to assist them in reconceptualising curriculum development, implementing technology-enabled blended learning, and facilitating learning in large classes.

The increase in undergraduate enrolments and the lack of concomitant growth in academic staff directly impacts on the student-to-staff ratio and the teaching load of academics. The national ratio is 1:26 and we are 1:29, but the average varies significantly across faculties, with 1:21 in science to 1:67 in law, for example. Over the past few years, financial constraints have made it difficult to fill academic vacancies. However, our Resource Allocation Model (RAM) was adapted in 2019 to ensure that every faculty was provided with the full amount needed to fill all their academic vacancies. This additional injection into the academic salary RAM of approximately R50-million, has made it possible to appoint 40 new academics across all faculties.

### Postgraduate and postdoctoral focus

There is a direct correlation between the proportion of academic staff with PhDs and

research outputs.

Our university achieved a weighted research output of 1.67 in 2018 compared to the national average of 1.88. We are pleased that our doctoral graduates for 2018 increased by 11% to 102, compared to 92 in 2017. However, the number of master's graduates declined by 10% to 296, relative to 304 in 2017, and there was a decline in our Honours graduates – a situation which we are investigating, as these are crucial pipeline qualifications for progression from undergraduate to masters, doctoral and postdoctoral studies.

In 2019, our university is hosting 63 postdoctoral fellows compared to 52 in 2017. Postdoctoral fellows contribute to the university in terms of publication outputs, postgraduate supervision and general research support. For example, the 2018 cohort of postdoctoral fellows published over 50 peer-reviewed papers. External funding for postdoctoral fellowships has been declining, however, and this has become one area of focus where resource mobilisation will be required going forward.

### Co-created university culture

Overall, we are making significant, ongoing strides to promote holistic under- and postgraduate student success in keeping with our student-centred ethos and growing our academic pipeline.

In closing, I would like to emphasise this ethos: At Mandela we strive to provide a positive, enabling and inclusive learning environment where all students have agency and voice; where they contribute ideas and co-create a university culture that places them in an optimal position to succeed and fully enjoy the once-in-a-lifetime liberating experience which university education provides.

# INAUGURAL LECTURES



**Prof Adrian Konik**  
FACULTY OF ARTS

"Discourse, cinema, and desubjectification: From Foucault to Deleuze and beyond..."

29 APRIL 2019



**Prof Houdini Fourie**  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS & ECONOMIC SCIENCES

"Ethics, cultures, fraud and corruption – the unanswered questions"

27 MAY 2019



**Prof Magnolia Ngcobo-Sithole**  
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

"Research and professional work in gender-based violence: Lessons learned and perceived risks"

3 JUNE 2019



**Prof Nadine Strydom**  
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

"Coastal fishes under the microscope: A marine biologist's journey"

10 JUNE 2019



## MANDELA CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS WRAP UP

An academic and scholarly programme anchored in a resolve to be in service to society, with a sharp social justice focus.

This is what Nelson Mandela University's yearlong Centenary Celebrations Programme demonstrated through the various conferences, colloquia, book and film festival launches and public lectures that characterised the commemorations.

The university was intentional in its approach of rooting the centenary commemorations in its academic project, as that was the best contribution it could make towards preserving and nurturing Nelson Mandela's legacy.

Since launching the Centenary Celebrations Programme in July last year, Vice-Chancellor Prof Sibongile Muthwa has repeatedly expressed the significance of anchoring it in the academic, scholarly and engagement project of the university.

"Locating our Mandela Centenary programme in the academic enterprise resonates with the importance Mandela placed on education, illustrated so emphatically with his famous declaration in July 2003 that 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'," she said.

The centenary year wraps up with a few remaining activities, including the inaugural Mandela Lecture series and the second Nelson Mandela Annual Youth Convention, which took place in July.

The Centenary Programme saw the university earnestly delving into the process of deepening, embedding and enhancing the meaning of its new name and identity in its core teaching, learning, research and engagement mandate and ethos.

During the centenary year, the university hosted a series of institution-wide events and activities, driven by all faculties, and launched a number of research initiatives, Chairs and centres that all contribute to what the institution is becoming in terms of its intellectual and scholarly identity.

These include the launch of the Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education (CriSHET); Chair for Identities and Social Cohesion in Africa (ISCIA) and the Centre for Philosophy in Africa.

Emanating from the Centenary Celebrations activities is a renewed energy for humanising pedagogy - and the university is in the process of reimagining 'engagement' beyond the bounds of conventional university practices through the Hubs of Convergence.

## A TRAGIC HERO?

In various biographies, Nelson Mandela is portrayed as the product of a "tribal" world in which he watched his guardian, Chief Jongintaba, exercise a certain leadership style to run the village.

However, what has not come out in these biographies is his experiences of political modernity – through his family's "pragmatic cooperation" with colonialists and their role in the quasi-parliamentary iBhunga (traditional council).

This forms the basis of the first of the inaugural Mandela Lecture series launched in July – which is one of three remaining institutional activities planned to close off Mandela University's year-long Centenary Celebrations programme.

The inaugural Mandela Lecture series, delivered by George Washington professor and Mandela University visiting professor Xolela Mangcu, was a two-part event, aimed at becoming a flagship annual lecture.

The first lecture, titled Mandela – The Untold Heritage, took place on 24 July and the second, titled Mandela's Tragic Pragmatism: Leadership as Radical Sacrifice on 31 July.

The second lecture argued that neither the pragmatic cooperation nor the Victorian elitism protected Mandela – and other educated black elites – from the vagaries and vicissitudes of white racism.

The idea of Mandela as a "tragic hero" may come as a surprise for someone whose story has been highly romanticised. Yet, Mandela bore all the flaws of the tragic hero – the vanity and stubbornness and the decades of imprisonment on Robben Island.

He was saved, however, by the possession of arguably the most important quality of great leaders – self-awareness.

"This 'tragedy' perspective heightens our capacity for empathy for human suffering – and inspires us to action."



Official launch ... The roll-out of the process of naming and renaming was officially launched by Vice-Chancellor Prof Sibongile Muthwa in May, with staff, students and the families of those after whom the first residence buildings have been renamed, in attendance.

The new Naming and Renaming project, aimed at building an inclusive institutional culture that contributes to transformation, is underway across all seven university campuses. A naming policy to support the roll-out process for change is also in place.

# MOVING CLOSER TO A MISSIONVALE DREAM

## MEDICAL PROGRAMME INFRASTRUCTURE, CURRICULUM PROCESSES ON TRACK

An official announcement regarding the new medical degree for Nelson Mandela University at Missionvale Campus will only be possible once all accreditation processes have been completed.

The accreditation process requires approvals from numerous officiating bodies, including the Department of Higher Education and Training and the Department of Health, as well as the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

To date, the university has received some of the necessary approvals from the Department of Higher Education and Training and recently the Health Ministry, while the CHE has approved the proposed MBChB (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) curriculum, subject to conditions.

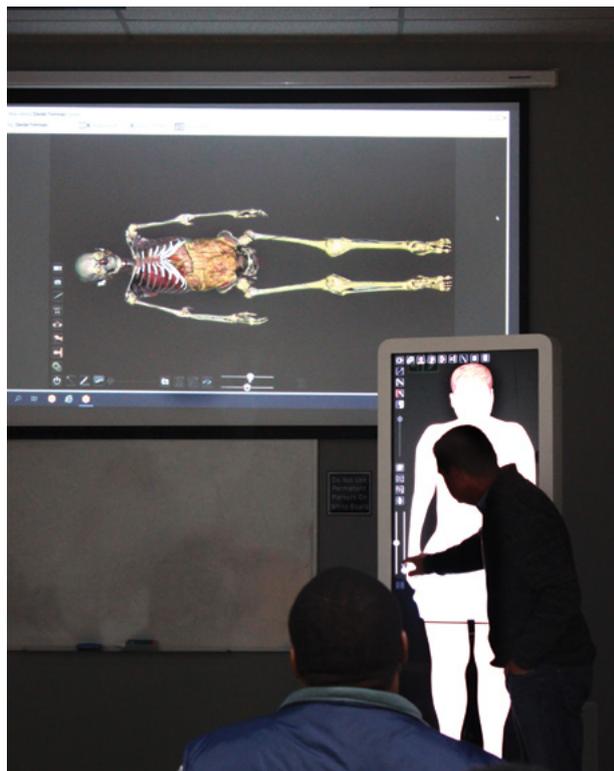
Outstanding final approvals are from the HPCSA and CHE, which will undertake a five-day accreditation visit to Missionvale Campus at the end of October to ascertain the university's state of readiness in terms of human resources, infrastructure, equipment and curriculum. It is only when all the necessary professional and government approvals have been formally concluded that the university can finalise the recruitment of staff and open applications for prospective medical students.

Thereafter, an announcement can be made with regards to the official launch of the Missionvale Campus and the country's 10th medical school and the starting dates for the six-year medical degree.

In light of the outstanding critical steps in the accreditation process, it is unlikely that the medical programme will be offered from 2020, as initially envisaged. It is hoped that the programme will be offered from 2021.

Given the magnitude of introducing such an innovative health education model that will embrace the benefits of high-end technology and use a distributive training platform, this will offer the university sufficient time to appoint new staff, complete all digital and technology training, fine-tune its selection criteria and entrench relations with various partners.

**Inquiries:** For more information, updates and access to responses to a range of frequently asked questions, all interested parties are urged to visit <https://health.mandela.ac.za/medical-school>. Additional enquires may be directed to [medicalschooll@mandela.ac.za](mailto:medicalschooll@mandela.ac.za)



REVAMPED ... Former labs have been upgraded to support the innovative, digitally-driven MBChB programme. The university is also actively improving the present water and security challenges to the benefit of staff and students, and those living in the immediate vicinity of Missionvale Campus.



The high-end anatomage table with its virtual patients and scenario testing is part of the future medical school's exciting new tuition model. Staff at the University are already undergoing training in the new technology.

## GEORGE CAMPUS INVESTS OVER R70M IN NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

One of the strategic priorities of Mandela University is the fostering of an affirming, transformative institutional culture that promotes diversity and social cohesion.

To this end, George Campus is set to benefit from a R70-million investment in various infrastructure projects within the next 12 to 18 months. The new projects will further enhance the provision of conducive teaching and learning environments for both students and staff.

The university is committed to progressively expand its infrastructure across all campuses.

### New projects

- A 198-bed student accommodation facility at a cost of R50m to alleviate the growing demand for on-campus accommodation.
- The refurbishment and conversion of the old Furntech Building (R8m) into a large lecturing facility that will also serve as a multipurpose facility.
- The construction of an additional fresh water reservoir at a cost of R6m to supplement the current reservoir's capacity for the George Campus community.

In addition, other smaller but equally significant projects are underway.

### These include:

- Supplementing of water capacity, with the assistance of AEON, through the sinking of a borehole, which will offer additional water capacity of 2400 litres an hour.
- Renovation and modernisation of the central Protection Services Control Room.
- Upgrading of the facilities for our Horticulture staff.

Funding for these projects includes allocations received from the Ministry of Higher Education and Training for this type of infrastructure development, as well as external stakeholders.