



Vice-Chancellor's Quarterly Report to Council

Quarter 4, 2021

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Table of Contents

1	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	1
2	<i>STRATEGIC TRAJECTORIES TOWARDS VISION 2030</i>	1
	2.1 Medical School	1
	2.2 Ocean Sciences	2
	2.3 Revitalising the Humanities.....	2
3	<i>DISTINCTIVE EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY THAT CONTRIBUTES TO STUDENT ACCESS FOR SUCCESS</i>	3
	3.1 Sustainability through curriculum design and renewal	3
	3.2 Student achievements	4
	3.3 Sustainability through digital transformation of LT	5
4	<i>ENGAGED, INNOVATIVE SCHOLARSHIP CULTURE THAT GENERATES KNOWLEDGE RECOGNISED FOR ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABILITY</i>	6
	4.1 Sustainability science.....	6
	4.2 Research excellence and sustainable funding	6
	4.3 Enhancing research capacity	7
	4.3.1 Postgraduate funding	7
	4.3.2 Academic staff and postgraduate support.....	7
	4.4 Innovation	7
	4.5 Stewardship of library and information services (LIS).....	7
5	<i>ENHANCING STUDENT LIVING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES</i>	8
	5.1 Student health and wellbeing.....	8
	5.2 Universal accessibility and disability services (UADS)	8
	5.3 Student governance and development.....	8
6	<i>TRANSFORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE THAT PROMOTES DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION</i>	9
	6.1 Sustainability of engagement and transformation.....	9
	6.2 Gender transformation and anti-GBV work.....	9
	6.3 Hubs of Convergence and entities	10
7	<i>ENABLING SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT PROMOTE AN EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS</i>	10
	7.1 Strategic risk identification and mitigation.....	10
	7.2 Enrolment management.....	10
	7.3 ICT and cybersecurity.....	11

7.4	Campus safety and security.....	11
7.5	COVID-19 vaccination rollout	11
7.6	Staff wellness	12
8	<i>ENHANCE LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND RESPONSIBLE RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP.....</i>	<i>12</i>
8.1	Water and energy sustainability	12
8.2	Strategic resource mobilisation and advancement (SRMA)	12
8.3	Short-term financial planning	13
8.4	Long-term financial planning	14
9	<i>CONCLUSION.....</i>	<i>14</i>

1 INTRODUCTION

In this final report for 2021, we provide Council with an overview of the strategic highlights and challenges encountered this year and indicate our readiness for the 2022 academic year. In our annual reporting cycle, **sustainability and stewardship** is the theme for quarter four with a focus on efforts to support academic excellence and meet wide-ranging operational needs, while promoting long-term sustainability.

2 STRATEGIC TRAJECTORIES TOWARDS VISION 2030

Mandela University is consistently guided by the core values and strategic intentions of Vision 2030 to advance its public good mandate. MANCO approved a strategic planning process and timelines for implementing Vision 2030, which provide the broad parameters for cascading institutional strategy within all MANCO portfolios, faculties, campuses, and institutional entities. The Vision 2030 infographic pamphlet enhances consistent messaging to internal and external stakeholders. Furthermore, the Office for Institutional Strategy is in the process of procuring of an online platform to facilitate integrated and evidence-informed and -based strategic planning.

2.1 Medical School

The official launch of our new Medical School was celebrated on November 30 with invited guests of honour who included Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Mr Blade Nzimande. This is indeed an historic milestone in the history of our University, and we salute all those who made this possible, including, in particular, our Council.

As per HPCSA accreditation guidelines, the Medical School's 2022 first-year student intake will increase from 50 to 80 and the selection committee convened in October to confirm acceptances. The Medical School received more than 5 500 applications for the 80 places available, demonstrating substantial national interest in our new programme. The Medical School is exploring a number of opportunities to build partnerships with financial and insurance institutions.

The Faculty of Health Sciences has also made significant inroads with the development of seven MMed Programmes, which will enhance the financial sustainability of the Medical School significantly when they come onstream. The Faculty expects that internal and external accreditation processes will be concluded in 2023 for intakes in 2024.

The University welcomed the new Chair in Nanomedicine, Dr Steven Mufamadi, based at Missionvale Campus in this quarter. Dr Mufamadi, a recipient of DSI funding, brings a wealth

of expertise in this field. This Chair enhances the growth potential of research and collaboration within and across faculties and disciplines, and with other external institutions.

2.2 Ocean Sciences

Transdisciplinary research in the field of Ocean Sciences has seen researchers from the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) collaborating with the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research (CMR) to promote holistic bio-psychosocial health and wellbeing through niches such as water, sanitation and hygiene, nanomaterials and the environment.

Dr Gavin Rishworth and Prof Janine Adams from CMR were awarded R2.2 million as part of the Global Challenge Research Fund. They are involved in a consortium research project focusing on *Ecosystem Management: Building Resilience and Adaptability to Coastal Climate Change Effects (EMBRACE)*.

In 2021, the Law Faculty presented the first year of the LLM Coursework in Ocean Governance, directly linked to the blue economy. The programme supports growing a pool of specialised legal practitioners and researchers able to tackle the legal aspects of ocean governance challenges in various sectors. The FishFORCE Academy continues to offer various training initiatives as part of Operation Phakisa that attract delegates from all over Africa. FishFORCE Short Learning Programmes are also delivered by partner universities at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, and the University of Nairobi in Kenya.

We are pleased to inform Council that the University has received SAQA approval to offer a Bachelor of Engineering Technology Honours in Marine Engineering and a Master of Marine Management. This will add considerable value to our existing suite of postgraduate ocean sciences qualifications.

2.3 Revitalising the Humanities

Alongside the ongoing focus on decoloniality, indigenous knowledges and interrogating Western hegemonies, there are other exciting new areas of study and research emerging in the Faculty of Humanities, such as digital humanities and animation. Digitalisation is at the centre of the Faculty of Humanities' strategic goals with each of the Schools and research entities, aiming to leverage the value of digital tools in facilitating research, learning and teaching. The University recently submitted a grant application to the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture for the Digitisation of the Archive, as well as developing a Virtual African Language Learning (VALL) World.

The nature of a decolonised curriculum is receiving special attention as part of the Humanities curriculum review, along with how to translate a responsive curriculum into innovative, inclusive and relevant classroom practices. The School of Language, Media and Communication (LMC), and the School for Governmental and Social Sciences (GSS) hosted Curriculum Conversations this quarter, titled *Language, Knowledge and Power* and *Rethinking the Canon: Text and the Archive* respectively. The process of developing a BA Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) programme is advanced, in response to the need for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences degrees not only to cultivate critical thinking, but also other skills to enhance their graduate employability.

Humanities Executive Dean, Professor Pamela Maseko, was awarded a grant of R1-million by the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences to build the African Languages Literary Heritage Research Hub. This project aims to undertake focused research on intellectual histories of selected African women, beginning with Dr Brigalia Bam, Nosekeni Mandela and Nongqawuse Mhlakaza.

The Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (*CriSHET*) rounded off the year-long Africa and Knowledge seminar series in September in collaboration with the Faculty of Humanities, the Centre for Philosophy in Africa, as well as the Emengini Institute for Comparative Global Studies, with a seminar by Prof Martin Ajei on *Development and the Quest for Modernity in Africa*. *CriSHET* was also involved in organising the final seminar of the year for the Advancing Critical University Studies across Africa (ACUSAfrica) network. *CriSHET* hosted Dr Su-Ming Khoo who delivered a presentation on *Sustainability, Transdisciplinarity and the Public Epistemic Role of Higher Education*.

3 DISTINCTIVE EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY THAT CONTRIBUTES TO STUDENT ACCESS FOR SUCCESS

The Learning and Teaching portfolio is constantly reviewing strategies to ensure that all faculties thrive notwithstanding the negative impacts of COVID-19 and related challenges.

3.1 Sustainability through curriculum design and renewal

The Faculty of Health Sciences, in collaboration with the LT Collab, acquired an interactive web-based curriculum mapping platform, Learning, Opportunities, Objectives and Outcome (LOOOP) in 2020, which has been used this year to evaluate the viability of programmes and to initiate curriculum redesign. This work will be expanded to other faculties in 2022.

The Faculty of Law regularly reviews programme offerings to ensure that these remain relevant and responsive to the African context. During the national review of the LLB, the Faculty highlighted the need to Africanise and decolonise the curriculum through enhancing

the mix of elective modules. To this end, the Faculty introduced a new final year elective module in the LLB focusing on Refugee Law in 2021.

The Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences recognised that heightened competition, locally and internationally, requires more innovative programme design and a quicker transformation to online delivery within the Business School. To keep pace with shifting market trends, 72 modules have been developed for remote online delivery to enhance our value proposition as a Green Business School.

With food insecurity on the rise in South Africa, it has become clear that the dietetics profession could focus more on community health and preventative care. To this end, the Dietetics and Nutrition programmes are being re-curriculated to better prepare graduates for optimum care. The Faculty of Health Sciences is also in the process of optimising short learning programmes to generate third stream income in collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Eastern Cape Department of Health.

The Faculty's Emergency Medical Care department signed an MoU with Rescue South Africa for Nelson Mandela University to become the "hub" for launching specialised local, national and international rescue activities. The virtual launch took place on 17 November 2021 and Rescue SA relocated about 60 tons of equipment, including vehicles and boats valued at more than R30-million, to Mandela University and the Eastern Cape. This partnership will greatly benefit our Health Sciences students and the communities that the University serves across the Metro and further afield.

The Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Technology hosted accreditation visits from the Engineering Council of South Africa in the fourth quarter, covering Civil, Electrical, Industrial, Marine and Mechanical Engineering and Mechatronics. The official outcomes of these accreditation visits will be communicated by ECSA in due course, but initial feedback is that accreditation will be retained.

3.2 Student achievements

Mandela University architecture students, Zander Deysel and Gideon Williams, took first place in the 2021 PG Bison's and the Caesarstone student design competitions respectively. In addition, Mr Williams also won the best presentation award and Mandela University was recognised as the winning institution in the PG Bison competition. Both competitions focused on recycling and repurposing in the built environment space.

Two Mandela University Geosciences students won awards at the recent three-day annual Groundwater Conference in South Africa, attended in person and online by professionals and students from all over South Africa and the world. MSc in Geography student Natasha

Gariremo won the best poster presentation, while BSc Geology honours student Sisipho Dlakiya won second place in the best poster presentation category, as well as second place in the Gamification category for participation in the online platform. Aarifah Williams won third place in the Gamification category. These students are all studying groundwater science.

We are also proud of four of our students who have made it through to the prestigious GradStar Top 100. GradStar is a programme that recognises the top 100 students across the country based on leadership qualities and readiness for the workplace. Over 8 000 entries were received this year, which were narrowed down to the best 100. The four Mandela University students included in this year's list are language studies student, Azrah Rajah; accountancy student, Nkazimulo Kubone; law student, Liso Zenani; and MBA student, Gary Sayster.

3.3 Sustainability through digital transformation of LT

Continued COVID-19 disruptions have led to new ways of delivering education through hybrid models of learning and teaching. We need to celebrate our staff achievements in embracing innovative blended and online learning tools, while also recognising challenges associated with this.

The pandemic has highlighted various risks, one of these being the lack of suitable venues to offer synchronous hybrid learning opportunities for current and future students. The newly-erected annexe of the Faculty of Law houses a multi-purpose venue, seating 60-70 students. The Faculty is investigating the costs of investing in digital, visual and audio technology to allow for the optimal use of the venue and to offer hybrid and flexible modes of delivery.

The past quarter has seen ongoing support to academics via the Learning Experience Design (LXD) Studio and e-Technologist support hub in the LT Collab. The UCDP-funded learning and teaching helpdesk saw steady growth in the number of help tickets relating to assistance with Moodle, Teams, digital assessment and more.

The LXD joined with Rhodes University's learning unit to successfully co-host the UP2U virtual event. This is a long-running national event for instructional and learning designers, educational technologists and academic support professionals and was attended by more than 100 delegates from more than ten universities.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the open education community, Gino Fransman from the LT Collab has received funding from UNESCO and received a global Open Education Emerging Leader Award for Excellence. This award was granted for his enthusiastic advocacy and use of open education to provide free, high quality, fully accessible educational

resources. This project forms part of the Siyaphumelela Programme funded by the Kresge Foundation.

The University's #OpenEdColloquium21 took place on 17 November 2021 with a focus on *Pedagogy, Praxis and Pandemics*. The speakers reflected on online learning and teaching approaches, curriculum development, language and student engagement, as well as mask-to-mask lectures. In addition, Open Education professional development and certification has been launched, enabling the completion of the six-module Becoming an Open Education Influencer course, which is available on the Open Moodle site.

4 ENGAGED, INNOVATIVE SCHOLARSHIP CULTURE THAT GENERATES KNOWLEDGE RECOGNISED FOR ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABILITY

4.1 Sustainability science

Nelson Mandela University's approach to sustainability science research aligns with the sustainable development goals of the United Nations, the African Union Agenda 2063 – *The Africa We Want*, and the National Development Plan in addressing global issues from a uniquely African perspective. Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions to extreme weather and climate change impact. In this quarter, an institution-building process for advancing sustainability science has been underway, applying the core principles of transdisciplinarity and systems-thinking.

4.2 Research excellence and sustainable funding

The research community at Mandela successfully applied for various external grants in diverse fields. Among these, Hiten Parmar from eNtsa and his team were awarded a UK PACT Countries Programme, "STRAPSA – Shifting the Transport Paradigm for South Africa", worth R7.9-million. In addition, the Human Movement Science department continued an external research partnership with the University of Basel, which has generated research funding in excess of R15-million over the last few years.

South African universities have faced the challenge of low expenditure of NRF research grants due to postgraduate students and researchers not being able to access laboratories, travel to field sites and undertake other local and overseas travel. To avoid the risk that these grants will be forfeited, individual engagements are ongoing with the NRF, but a sector-wide engagement through USAf may be necessary.

4.3 Enhancing research capacity

4.3.1 Postgraduate funding

As of 25 October 2021, 372 Honours, 755 Masters and 360 Doctoral scholarships were awarded with funding from Council, the National Research Foundation (NRF) and other external funders. Of these 80% of the recipients were Black (African, Coloured, Indian and Asian), and 59% were female students.

4.3.2 Academic staff and postgraduate support

As part of its strategic objective to promote long-term sustainability, the University has leveraged funding from the NRF and DHET to ensure that academic staff receive the support and training needed to attain higher degrees. There are, however, serious capacity constraints in terms of postgraduate supervisory capacity and mitigating this risk requires that all academics who hold at least a Masters qualification receive mentoring to equip them to take on supervision. Regular writing retreats are arranged in all faculties to encourage academic writing and boost research outputs.

4.4 Innovation

Mandela University seeks to promote sustainability by creating and sustaining an enabling innovation ecosystem through our commercialisation vehicle, Innovolve. To date, we have provided direct support to over 40 researchers and students in terms of intellectual property (IP) protection and securing seed funding for technology development towards commercialisation. Our partner, Propella Business Incubator, provides technology and business development support for innovative ventures. Its new hub in Neave Township has supported 44 youth entrepreneurs, 22 female-owned ventures, and 50 Black-owned SMME ventures since it was launched in 2020. Recently, the ongoing licence agreement for Gammatutor IP yielded royalty income of R2.5 million for the University, which will be shared with the inventor in accordance with our IP policy.

4.5 Stewardship of library and information services (LIS)

LIS is shaping itself for an increasingly digital future with searches for collections moving from print to electronic formats. As much as 80% of the LIS resource budget is now spent on electronic information resources. However, this poses its own sustainability challenge as digital content licence agreements are relatively short, typically one to five years, and terms and conditions change as new licences are negotiated. In addition, prices of e-books have doubled since 2019. Our LIS forms part of the South East Academic Libraries System (SEALS)

consortium, which improves economies of scale through sharing e-book collections. Another solution is to explore the adoption of open educational resources.

5 ENHANCING STUDENT LIVING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

5.1 Student health and wellbeing

Emthonjeni Student Wellness (ESW) staff are all back on campus in response to student requests for mask-to-mask (M2M) counselling. Online services are made available for those students who prefer tele-counselling as well as those who do not live near our centres.

Over the past quarter, we have encouraged a slow re-emergence of student life activities while ensuring that all COVID safety protocols are adhered to. As a result, we have not witnessed a rise in infections that could be attributed to the hosting of these events and this has also helped to mitigate the mental health challenges experienced by students due to social isolation.

Tragically, just a few days before the SRC elections, two students drowned in the sea on 23 October 2021 during an off-campus DASO-organised activity at Sardinia Bay. The University has been offering ongoing support to the families of these students.

5.2 Universal accessibility and disability services (UADS)

UADS organised two TheraBox sessions that were tailored enhance the well-being of students with disabilities, with a particular focus on mental, emotional and physical difficulties related to academic performance and online learning during the pandemic. First Rand Foundation has donated funding of around R2 million to purchase equipment for students with visual impairments.

In line with strengthening our ongoing partnership with schools, UADS facilitated a tertiary education readiness workshop with two schools in the Nelson Mandela Metro and one in the OR Tambo District. In collaboration with the Access and Enrolment office, UADS provided career guidance to Grade 12 learners and assisted them with the Mandela University online application process.

5.3 Student governance and development

Two Student Representative Council (SRC) elections were held in 2021 due to the delay in the start of the academic year caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 SRC elections took place in March 2021, while the 2022 SRC elections were held successfully on 27 and 28 October 2021. The voter turnout improved significantly from an average of about 24% to 39%.

This can be attributed to a shift from manual and online voting. The newly elected SRC is expected to assume office from January 2022.

6 TRANSFORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE THAT PROMOTES DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

6.1 Sustainability of engagement and transformation

The efforts of the Engagement and Transformation Portfolio towards a more sustainable future continue, as documented by the engagement project mapping process. The Institutional Engagement Forum continued its consultations in the fourth quarter to provide a platform for interdisciplinary engagement partnerships, systems and capacity-building. For example, the University engages with the AmaJingqi Chief and community with a focus on early childhood development, quality education, sustainable ICT development, and wildlife economy with partners such as the Department of Environmental Affairs and Exium.

CriSHET continues to model a successful strategy for strengthening research and covering its own costs through research subsidy generation. This year, *CriSHET* submitted 60 outputs for subsidy claims (five books, 24 book chapters and 31 articles), which should generate more than R4 million in subsidy for the University, with *CriSHET*'s 2021 budget coming in below this by at least R1.3 million.

6.2 Gender transformation and anti-GBV work

The work of the Gender Transformation Working Group (GTWG), co-chaired by the Centre for Women and Gender Studies and the Transformation Office, is ongoing. This includes mapping postgraduate theses that intersect with gender, in an effort to establish an internal network of gender scholars.

The Chair in African Feminist Imaginations and the CWGS hosted a feminist and gender writing workshop for emerging gender scholars in October 2021 in partnership with the University of Fort Hare (Chair in Sexualities, Genders and Queer Studies) and Rhodes University (Political and International Studies). The incumbent of the Chair, Professor Pumla Dineo Gqola, has also been elected as a member of the South African Association for Gender Studies.

The University is progressing well in building a renewed equality architecture. The Integrated Equality Policy was approved by Council in December 2020, together with the sexual harassment and sexual offences policy. Two additional reconstructed policies – on racism and racial discrimination and on gender equality – are serving at Council today, enlarging our suite of instruments in the protection, promotion and advancement of equality within the University and beyond.

Given that women constitute 59% of all students at public HEIs in South Africa, urgent and dedicated efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence remain a high priority. To this end, the GBV Forum, comprising ten NGOs, obtained R50 000 from the Nelson Mandela University Convergence Fund for various GBV-related advocacy and awareness interventions to be undertaken during the 16 days of activism in November and December.

6.3 Hubs of Convergence and entities

Over this reporting period, the Hubs of Convergence (HoC) that have been most active are those working with food sovereignty, gender-based violence, community-based economic activities, and knowledge communication and application. CIPSET is advancing its solidarity economy education (SEE) programme with a group of TVET College graduates who are mostly young women. CIPSET is also engaging with colleagues in the Community Convergence Workstream to support community gardeners, as well as the Young Black Engineering Co-operative (YBEC). YBEC is exploring the construction of eco-friendly greenhouses that combine engineering skills with food production.

The Chair for Youth Unemployment, Employability and Empowerment (CYUEE) has contributed to the DHET TVET Colleges Research Programme. This report highlighted how inefficiencies in NSFAS exacerbate poverty amongst students and impact negatively on the academic performance of TVET College students. The CYUEE's ongoing scholarship has been published in a paper titled *Planning for Freedom: From Human Capital to Human Capabilities* and the Chair has also been awarded an NIHSS grant for a project focusing on skills, livelihoods and the informal sector.

7 ENABLING SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT PROMOTE AN EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

7.1 Strategic risk identification and mitigation

The Institutional Events Register (IER) records strategic risks and opportunities that have been identified and assessed as potentially affecting the ability of the University to achieve its Vision 2030 strategic priorities. The implementation of Barn Owl Software as a risk management information system is underway and a whistleblowing implementation plan has been drafted and is set to be considered by Council for approval.

7.2 Enrolment management

As a critical dimension of our future sustainability, the Enrolment Management Task Team has been leading the process to ensure that applications are converted to enrolments. Encouragingly, more applicants have been provisionally accepted this year compared to the

same date in 2020. We are implementing wide-ranging efforts to broaden our national and international student recruitment footprint, while also improving system efficiencies to promote a more integrated student access and enrolment value chain.

7.3 ICT and cybersecurity

The sixth cycle of DHET Infrastructure Efficiency Grant (IEG) funding prioritises the use of digital platforms and tools, while also repurposing existing infrastructure to support more blended approaches to learning, teaching and ways of working. A multi-faceted Infrastructure Strategy is being developed to respond to these imperatives and to contribute to long-term sustainability.

ICT Services updated the Information and Communication Technology Committee on 25 October 2021 on the Information Security Annual Plan of Operations. The update highlighted the lack of an official patch management procedure. This has been identified as a risk requiring amelioration.

The University's Digital Transformation strategy development process, co-convened by the DVCs for Learning and Teaching and People and Operations, was formally launched on 13 October 2021 at a special EMANCO. To ensure timeous and efficient completion, a project consultant/manager is being procured.

7.4 Campus safety and security

Government approval has been obtained to proceed with phase 1 of the closed campus project. The tender was awarded in August 2021 and the estimated completion date of this project is mid-March 2022. Access control management has been tightened with additional interventions such as the use of technology and hands-on management to search vehicles, as well as visible patrolling of vulnerable areas.

7.5 COVID-19 vaccination rollout

By the end of October 2021, the Mandela University Vaccination Centre had vaccinated 11 459 individuals, of whom 9 147 were community members and were 2 155 University employees. By comparison, uptake among students has been slow, with 4 200 vaccinated as at the end of October. The Student Health Mobile Unit has been visiting on- and off-campus residences and assessment sites during the November examination period to encourage more students to vaccinate. Plans are also in place to target new students during the orientation programme in 2022.

7.6 Staff wellness

The COVID pandemic continues to take its toll on the health and wellness of staff, manifesting as increases in stress, anxiety, grief, trauma, and depression. This points to the need for a long-term solution. An Integrated Health and Wellness Strategic Framework is currently under consideration. With the recent piloting of a mental health and wellness programme within the Faculty of Health Sciences and the positive feedback received from staff, there is now an opportunity to develop similar interventions for other faculties and divisions.

As a caring employer it is essential to prioritise the health and wellbeing of staff while still ensuring operational continuity. The University will therefore close earlier for the summer recess on 15 December, as opposed to 21 December, and will re-open on 3 January 2022.

8 ENHANCE LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND RESPONSIBLE RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

8.1 Water and energy sustainability

The water situation in the Metro remains dire. Per capita consumption on our campuses is monitored daily to inform planning. Approximately R4.1 million (out of a budget of R5.3 million) has been spent on water crisis mitigation strategies, coordinated through a technical working group comprising water scientists and engineers. These strategies focus on installing electronically-controlled water meters and water tanks; implementing a communication campaign aimed at changing mindsets and behaviours; and working closely with the Metro to reduce per capita consumption levels.

Since the start of load shedding in 2008, the University has installed generators to support critical functions across all campuses. This has since been complemented by the construction of the photovoltaic solar farm on Summerstrand South Campus. The University's renewable energy strategy envisions photovoltaic systems installed on all campuses at a projected total cost of R66-million. The capital outlay will yield significant savings on the University's electricity bill with a payback period of about 5.5 years. The process to install the Missionvale Campus solar farm has commenced. The installation, estimated at a cost of R4 million, is planned for 2022 and will be funded from the five-year maintenance budget.

8.2 Strategic resource mobilisation and advancement (SRMA)

The SRMA and Nelson Mandela University Trust have focused on mobilising funding for bursaries, scholarships and engagement projects. As at the end of October, just over R80-million had been mobilised. Trust income from investments amounting to R6.5 million.

The SRMA has also co-ordinated a number of strategic partnerships in support of our apex priorities. Among these, the University has entered into a five-year partnership with the National School of Government, centred on the revitalised Raymond Mhlaba Centre in the Faculty of Humanities.

8.3 Short-term financial planning

In 2021, there were 16 798 NSFAS-funded registered students. The University processed a record number of 7 688 student concession applications, approving 6 809. The current concessions have an impact on outstanding student debt, with more than R91 million outstanding on the concession balance as at 31 October.

Of further concern is that students who have exceeded the N+1 criterion will not receive NSFAS funding for 2022. Currently 974 students are likely to be affected, but this may increase as some final year students may not pass the 2021 academic year. This translates to R26 251 654 per annum based on current estimates and is likely to increase. The University is awaiting a response from NSFAS regarding the appeals process for these students. Should NSFAS refuse funding for this cohort, many of these students will not have funding to complete their qualifications in 2022 and this creates a significant credit and student throughput risk for the University.

Due to the current strain on the fiscus as well as the reprioritisation of DHET funding toward NSFAS allocations, we do not anticipate a CPI linked, let alone real growth, increase in block grants in the medium-term. The latest forecast as at end September 2021 anticipates an operating deficit of R10.4-million, with R37.6 million surplus after forecasted investment income. This also assumes no further salary adjustments and includes the conclusion of a dispute resolution on the salary increase implemented for 2021 with the once-off payment of R4 500 per employee.

A key sustainability indicator is the salary benchmark which was set at 65% up until re-integration of previously outsourced staff. This indicator then spiked to 67.5% which resulted in finance income being used to balance operations and then reducing to 63.5% for 2019 due to a windfall in subsidy received in 2018 and above CPI subsidy allocations in 2019. A deviation will be requested for 2022-2024 to allow the budgeted indicator to be increased to 66% to fund mission-critical posts as part of the implementation of the Council-approved organisational redesign outcomes.

The 2022 Annual Budget and Annual Performance Plan (APP) will be tabled for approval by Council. The budget includes a 4.23% increase in tuition fees and 6.23% increase in student accommodation fees as proposed by the DHET. A balanced operational budget for 2022 will be presented to Council with a R42.5-million surplus after investment income (4.25% surplus).

This falls short of Council's current performance indicator of reserve accumulation of between 5% and 10%.

A separate report on B-BBEE will be tabled at Council.

8.4 Long-term financial planning

There are many levels of uncertainty as we grapple with short-term solutions to ameliorate the impact of shrinking government funding. Council has set a new sustainability target, that Council-controlled reserves should equal the annual Council-controlled operating costs. The ratio is currently 0.55 (AFS 2020) and to achieve 1.00, the University would need to increase unrestricted Council reserves by R1.09-billion. This would be in addition to the salary budget benchmark indicator, as well as targeting a surplus of between 5% and 10% as to grow reserves.

In response to these imperatives, the Sustainability and Institutional Viability Task Team (SIVTT) has begun its work in earnest. SIVTT comprises various working groups to oversee wide-ranging interventions such as sustainability modelling and scenario development, academic optimisation and strategic differentiation, improved operating efficiencies and cost effectiveness, as well as strategy-aligned resource mobilisation and budgeting. Each working group has been tasked with identifying opportunities to optimise various revenue streams including subsidy, fees and third-stream income as an essential precondition for long-term sustainability.

9 CONCLUSION

Amidst the uncertainties confronting the higher education sector, nationally and globally, the University is persevering in its quest to ensure that the implementation of Vision 2030 contributes in substantive ways to a more socially equitable and sustainable future for all. In the short term, we will need to prioritise the wellbeing of students and employees, while also investing in digitalisation and the modernisation of existing infrastructure to facilitate hybrid, flexible learning, teaching and ways of working.

As we pursue humanising pedagogies, pioneering research and innovation, and transformative engagement, we will be guided by our core values and our commitment to sustainable resource stewardship.

We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to Council, employees, students, alumni and external stakeholders for unwavering support in successfully navigating our way through another challenging year.