



**Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council
Quarter 4**

30 November 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

This fourth quarterly report of 2023 presents strategic highlights and challenges with a thematic focus on sustainability and stewardship. It highlights ongoing efforts to build a solid foundation for meeting current operational needs while promoting long-term strategic alignment and sustainability. This aligns with Nelson Mandela University's Vision 2030 aspiration to be a dynamic African university, recognised for its leadership in generating cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future.

2. VISION 2030 AND STRATEGIC TRAJECTORIES

Vision 2030 seeks to advance social justice by providing transformative, lifelong educational experiences that liberate human potential and contribute to promoting the public good. As a university in the service of society, key strategic niches such as ocean sciences, the medical school, revitalising the humanities, and transdisciplinary sustainability sciences make a significant contribution towards achieving this vision.

2.1. Ocean Sciences

The transdisciplinary research of the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research (CMR) advances understanding of the coastal and marine environment in alignment with the University's institutional research theme for environmental stewardship and sustainable livelihoods. Several new international projects were started in 2023, including one funded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that will develop planning guidelines and support to Kenya's marine spatial planning process.

The CMR and the Helmholtz Institute for Functional Marine Biodiversity (HIFMB) have extended their five-year collaboration with Carl-von-Ossietzky University in Oldenburg (UOL). It will now include a funded bilateral exchange programme in the marine sciences. Cooperation with the Ocean University of China is also being explored and this will contribute to strengthening existing capacity development, training, and education.

The SARChI Chair in Ocean Cultures and Heritage generates creative outputs to advance social consciousness of sustainability. As an example, the International Conference on Human Relations with the Sea in September included a transnational Human Oceans Exhibition of photography, sculpture and ceramics presented on the Ocean Sciences Campus in Gqeberha and at two venues in Windhoek, Namibia. This conference was leveraged to convene Khoi and Xhosa traditional leaders to discuss the importance of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and the future of ocean management in Africa. Through the Chair, seven documentary films on themes of cultural heritage, ecological sustainability, and human relations with nature have also been produced.

2.2. Medical School

Sixty percent of the student enrolment in the MBChB programme is from quintile 1-3 schools. This is a crucial dimension of strategic differentiation and sustainability since it removes the structural barriers that prevent learners from low-income communities qualifying as medical doctors. The Medical School has been held up as a beacon for benchmarking by other universities wishing to follow suit.

Encouragingly, in August 2023, the Faculty of Health Sciences celebrated the awarding of a six-year grant to support seven MBChB students, via the Chan Soon-Shiong Family Foundation and the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC). However, constraints relating to government funding pose significant challenges and the University needs firm commitments from the national departments of Higher Education and Training, and Health, to advance to the next stage of providing high quality medical training on the Western region clinical platform.

Potential partners locally and internationally are also needed to drive third stream income-generation in support of long-term financial sustainability. To this end, key partnerships and collaborations are ongoing with the faculty having successfully hosted visits from Aspen, Synergy Biomedical Research Institute (SBRI), Jose Pearson Hospital Clinical Governance and Management Team, and Ubuntu Pathways.

2.3. Revitalising the Humanities

The Faculty of Humanities engagement, *“Celebration of 200 Years of the Written Word of isiXhosa”* on 22 October, was a highlight of the second semester. Mandela honorary doctorate Noxolo Grootboom, and alumnus Laduma Ngxokolo, were among those who addressed the well-attended event, which was the first known scholarly gathering to be mediated in the medium of isiXhosa.

The Faculty of Humanities is building a digital humanities hub focused on innovation and exploration of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), with flagship projects that include virtual African language learning, intellectual histories of Black South Africans, and a self-sustaining, community-embedded, micro-certificate in IKS and Agricultural Science which is being developed in partnership with Northern areas learners and youth. Hub members are hosting the Digital Humanities Association of Southern Africa conference, as well as the DHIgnite symposium, at the University in November 2023, which is indicative of the inroads being made nationally.

The faculty is emerging strongly in national dialogues and scholarship on the value of humanistic and ethical considerations in Artificial Intelligence (AI) interventions. In addition, the faculty is collaborating with the School of ICT's Centre for Research in Information and Cyber Security (CRICS) on a Grade R Cyber Safety Project. This interdisciplinary project aims to impart essential, age-appropriate cybersafety skills to Grade R children in South Africa as an integral part of the school curriculum.

The completion and submission of 50 curriculum renewal applications this year is further contributing to the revitalisation of the humanities. This includes the near completion of the first phase of the BA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) pilot, which demonstrates the possibilities for enhanced transdisciplinary offerings.

2.4. Transdisciplinary Sustainability Sciences

In a bid to achieve just transitions towards sustainable futures in Africa (JusFA), the Research, Innovation and Internationalisation (RII) portfolio has submitted a proposal to access the Erasmus Intra Africa Mobility grant. This grant seeks to promote equitable processes for transitioning to a low-carbon economy, promote renewable energies, and support vulnerable communities in navigating the impact of climate change. The JusFA proposal submission is significant, because the process involved Moi University (Kenya), University of Dar Es Salaam (Tanzania), Uganda Management Institute (Uganda), and the University of Abomey-Calavi (Benin), with the University of Oldenburg (Germany) providing technical support.

The activities of entities such as the CMR, Marine Spatial Planning, the Sustainability Research Unit, Centre for African Conservation Ecology, AEON, as well as many Research Chairs, are underpinned by an economic, social, and environmental sustainability approach. Some exciting transdisciplinary work on the hydrogen economy is also emerging at Mandela University. Building on the historical and contemporary strengths in sustainability science, we will be launching the Transdisciplinary Institute for Sustainable Futures in 2024 to optimise opportunities in an area in which we already possess considerable research pedigree.

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

3.1. December Graduation

With the hosting of our Summer Graduation on 13 December, close to 150 degrees, including 44 doctorates, will be awarded to postgraduate students across the institution's seven faculties. Honorary doctorates will be conferred on four highly respected South Africans, namely, Mandla Langa, Justice Jody Kollapen, Professor Chabani Manganyi, and Nkemdilim Begho.

3.2. Programme and Qualification Mix Review and Faculty Sustainability

As part of the mandate of the Sustainability and Institutional Viability Task Team (SIVTT), the University's Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) is about to undergo a comprehensive review to assess the strategic and financial viability of all under- and postgraduate programmes.

In addition, the faculties have been engaging in various initiatives to promote sustainability. The Faculty of Education has started to inquire into effectively integrating ecological awareness into certain initial teacher education modules by implementing eco-pedagogy, which is designed and delivered with a strong experiential focus.

The Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology (EBET) has aligned its research themes and engagement focus areas to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The faculty recently produced an innovative 2023 annual report (*iDEATE*) focusing on the theme of *Pursuing Sustainable Futures for a Better World*.

The Faculty of Law convened a collaborative conference with the University of Johannesburg, with the theme of *The Role of Law in Shaping Sustainable Futures*. Academics and postgraduate students from both institutions came together in September 2023 to explore themes relating to the relationship between the global SDGs and the South African legal system within a constitutional context. This will form the basis for two books to be published in the first quarter of 2024.

After a thorough evaluation, the MBA programme has successfully maintained its international Association of MBAs (AMBA) accreditation. The Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences has been crafting a Vision 2030-aligned strategy for the Business School to ensure that it carves out a distinctive niche and offerings that enhance its long-term sustainability and positioning in an intensely competitive landscape. This strategy will be presented at the Council Strategic Reflections session on 29 November.

3.3. Sustainability in Teaching Development and Support

Early Career Academic Advancement Programme (ECAAP)

The ECAAP aims to enhance the academic skills and knowledge of early career academics (ECAs) to enable them to contribute sustainably to the academic community. A long-term view of sustainability is encouraged by advocating for the inclusion of diverse perspectives, indigenous knowledge systems, transformation, and decolonisation. ECAs are encouraged to actively critique unsustainable, socially unjust, and demoralising practices and policies to identify ethical and innovative solutions.

3.4. Technology-Rich Learning and Teaching and the Virtual Academy

Digital Learning Experience Design and Innovation (LXD) and Online Learning Programmes

The Digital Learning Experience Design and Innovation cluster (LXD) has been working on developing the University's first fully online programme offerings, in partnership with Higher Education Partners SA (HEPSA). The first online offerings will be accessible to the public in late 2025 and, in future, fully online short learning programmes and certificates will also be available. Whilst expanding our hybrid and hyflex offerings, new revenue opportunities are being opened by ensuring that learners can access our programmes virtually at different times of the year.

Open Resources and Textbooks

The cost of prescribed texts is prohibitive and there is need for good quality Open Education Resources (OER) that are relevant to the South African context. To this end, the Kresge-funded Siyaphumelela project has provided a grant to support academic staff in writing their own open education resources and textbooks. A workshop was held in October to introduce University staff to the concepts and the process of writing OERs, and there will be follow-up capacitation sessions.

Virtual Academy (VA)

The primary goal of the Virtual Academy therefore is to empower individuals to realise their potential, both personally and professionally, to employ digital technologies effectively and ethically. Bringing the VA work to life will take centre stage in 2024, along with further advancements in digitalising our institutional systems and processes. At all times, the focus will be on an inclusive, social justice approach to enabling human-centred digital innovation. The conceptualisation of the Virtual Academy will be presented at the Council Strategic Reflections session on 29 November.

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

4.1. Research Management

Increasingly, research practice is strengthening within the institution and researchers are publishing in top open access journals. In 2023, the University increased income generation from external research grants, including international grants and industry research partnerships. More than R63m was mobilised, mostly from NRF Research Chairs and international research grants. Income generated from NRF grants for postgraduate bursaries was more than R23m and R6.8m was allocated to emerging researchers.

4.2. Enhancing Research Capacity

Funding from Council, the National Research Foundation (NRF) and other external funders has enabled 1 252 scholarship awards (385 Honours, 533 Master's and 334 Doctoral scholarships) of which 1 063 (85%) have been taken up.

The research capacity development workshop series will have offered over 90 workshops in 2023. To date, 815 postgraduate students and 399 staff members have participated. Over the period under review, a combined investment of close to R1.5m was awarded to 41 early-career researchers for research running costs, teaching relief and conference participation.

The work of the Human (RECH) and Animal (RECA) research ethics committees maintains the University's accreditation with the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC). Customisation of the Mandela Ethics Online System (MEOS) has been completed and

introduced in a phased approach. Feedback from applicants, administrators, and reviewers thus far has been positive, with improved process flow and turn-around times for reviews reported.

4.3. Internationalisation and Expansion of African Footprint

International Recruitment

Recruiting international students and involving staff, students and postdoctoral fellows in global strategic research networks, alliances, associations, and multilateral agencies, contribute to promoting the University's sustainability agenda. International student recruitment has been hampered at a sectoral level by Department of Home Affairs backlogs and delayed visa outcomes. Despite a significant decline in the number of international students nationally, 919 international students registered at Nelson Mandela University as of 26 October 2023.

An International Office (IO) delegation visited Nigeria and Ghana in West Africa for recruitment drives from 27 August to 3 September 2023. Interviews with prominent media outlets in these countries amplified this outreach. In Nigeria, this included a live interview on Arise TV which was broadcast to 2.5m households. The IO team engaged with the South African Consulate in Ghana to address challenges in issuing visas to Ghanaian students intending to study in South Africa.

Partnerships - BRICS, Asia, Global North, and expansion of African footprint

International ties that have been actively explored over the past quarter with visiting Brazilian, Russian, Indian, and Chinese Ministerial officials and academic leaders are encouraging. The University and the delegations discussed possible strategic areas of collaboration, areas of mutual research cooperation, and possible staff and student exchanges. Asian partnerships have also been on an upward trajectory in 2023.

Additionally, the University sustains partnerships with universities from the Global North. Over the review period, several staff members visited countries such as Norway and Germany and several guests from universities in Europe visited Nelson Mandela University. In October 2023, the DVC: RII led a university delegation in a high-level bilateral meeting between South Africa and Norway. The University had been nominated to be part of the Economic, Social and Technological Working group due to its strength in ocean sciences and multidisciplinary research.

Continental partnerships fostered through the African Footprint Expansion Programme are increasing. The University recently visited Moi University in Kenya to collaborate and share knowledge with Moi School of Education staff in establishing a Hub of Convergence engagement framework. The University has also been approached by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) through the Africa Bilateral Cooperation Portfolio to identify mutual areas of research engagement on the continent. We hosted a roundtable discussion on Africa, BRICS, and EU research collaborations and funding during Research Week 2023, focusing on strengthening intra-continental networks.

5. TRANSFORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE THAT PROMOTES DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

5.1. Engagement Office

Various projects within the Engagement Office and the Hubs of Convergence address local and global challenges, such as poverty and food insecurity. The Mandela University Food Systems programme focuses on three key signature projects, namely:

- The student hunger project, which implements approaches that are student-centred, sustainable, and humanising.
- The greenhouse project, which converges the development needs of unemployed young students and the need of community farmers for seedling production.
- The community kitchens project, which evolves traditional “soup kitchens” into catalysts for community agency.

5.2. Transformation Office

The Transformation Office (TO) is actively working on sustainability plans for projects related to gender-based violence (GBV). The TO is revamping its website and enhancing resources such as an online first responder course, and pursuing collaborations with external organisations as part of the efforts to promote gender equality and combat GBV. Members of inquiry panels have also received training on various aspects of discrimination and harassment. Various events and training programmes have taken place over this quarter to promote inclusivity and address issues related to discrimination. These initiatives include a student health campaign, self-defence classes, and first responder training amongst others. Various sessions on topics like unconscious bias, LGBTQI+ violence, and gender-based violence (GBV) were also organised to promote positive masculinity and human rights.

5.2. Research Chairs, Centres, Working Groups, and Units

Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD)

CANRAD participated in the UN Nelson Mandela International Day event in Perth, Australia, focused on “*Reflections on Racial Discrimination, Self-Determination and Justice in South Africa and Australia*” with the Director delivering a keynote address. In September, CANRAD collaborated with the Azanian People's Organisation and the Pan-Africanist Students Movement Association to host events commemorating Steve Biko, culminating in the Annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture. The Centre also co-hosted a public debate with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) regarding *South African Youth Perspectives on the Energy Crisis and its Impact*.

Centre for Women and Gender Studies (CWGS) and DSI-NRF SARCHI Chair for African Feminist Imaginations (AFEMI)

Professor Pumla Dineo Gqola received an honorary doctorate from Stellenbosch University in October as recognition for her contributions to postcolonial theories, slave memory, and

violence. CWGS and AFEMI are involved in the Thabo Mbeki Presidential Centre Women's Development Colloquium and have publications in the pipeline. Ongoing projects undertaken to advance gender equality include developing a Gender Transformation Framework and a Gender Mapping Database, as well as designing two new postgraduate degree programmes in gender studies.

Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET)

CriSHET organised the annual ACUSAfrica Conference at the University of Ghana in partnership with Queen's University Belfast, the University of Ghana, and the Human Sciences Research Council. This three-day conference brought together delegates from a range of universities and institutions in Africa and globally to advance the intellectual project of Critical University Studies in the African context. The Chair is also actively pursuing the possibility of a memorandum of understanding with the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences in Rwanda to enhance the University's presence in Africa.

Chair for Youth Unemployment, Employability and Empowerment (CYUEE) and Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training (CIPSET)¹

Dr Francis Muronda, a leading researcher in the Africa Peer Network, visited Zimbabwe in September 2023 as part of his collaboration with Zimbabwean institutions. Through the CYUEE Research Chair and CIPSET, Mandela University hosted a Student Dialogue session in October, with the participation of student leaders from Port Elizabeth College (PEC) and Eastcape Midlands College (EMC).

Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies (TIMS)

TIMS continues pursuing its vital mission of embedding the Mandela ethos while promoting human potential and social justice. To this end, TIMS produced outputs such as *Embodying Mandela* and *Reflexive Voices* during 2023 to map the Mandela identity at the University over this period. Upcoming plans include an international seminar in 2024 to grow regional and global Mandela Studies partnerships.

6. ENHANCING STUDENT LIVING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

6.1. Student Governance and Development

The SRC elections took place on 18 and 19 October 2023, with 53% of students who voted doing so through online platforms. More than 60% of the 620 students enrolled for various student leadership development programmes in 2023 have completed their modules and expected hours of community work. Additionally, the LeadHer Programme, was piloted this year for women in leadership and 60% of the students enrolled (31 out of 52) completed the course.

¹ The possibility of streamlining this engagement entity and research chair into one joint capability is currently being explored.

6.2. Student Entrepreneurship and Youth Employability

A convening group co-led by the DVC Engagement and Transformation and the Dean of Students has been established to better coordinate various initiatives to promote student entrepreneurship and youth employability across the University. As part of this work, the draft concept paper on the establishment of the Mandela Africa Hub for Youth Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation is in place.

In addition, the Madibaz Student Entrepreneurship Lab has activated programmes through funding for the Student Employability and Entrepreneurship Development (SEED) programme. Approximately 500 students benefit from this annually and this year the programme expanded to our George campus, increasing this number to 547. The National Youth Development Agency is also invited onto campus once a month to leverage their services.

Eight Nelson Mandela University student entrepreneurs participated in the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education Intervarsity Regional competition, with two winning the categories for best business idea and best tech business.

As part of building an ecosystem of youth entrepreneurs in the province, a chapter of the community of practice (CoP) for Youth Entrepreneurship Incubators has been established in Nelson Mandela Bay with the University as the convenor. Student Life and Development has furthermore staged the first "Best Practice Indaba" for enterprise development, attended by CoP representatives and this is expected to be staged annually.

Career Services Unit

The Career Services Unit has been connecting students with industry opportunities, and this has included hosting presentations by organisations like SARS and Entelect. The Unit also facilitated a Public Relations Matchmaking event for PR students and engaged with Universal Accessibility and Disability Services to improve job prospects for disabled graduates.

Universum Survey and Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS)

The latest survey by Universum, an international employer branding organisation, includes the results of interviews with more than 2 600 Mandela University students. This survey found that most of our students identify as change makers, since they are purpose-driven and seek organisations that serve the common good. When asked what word best describes Nelson Mandela University, diversity and *ubuntu* were particularly associated with our institution. The variety of courses, the excellence of lecturing staff, access to learning materials and study spaces, and the quality of our study programmes were highlighted as the drivers that attract students to the University.

The Office for Institutional Strategy administered the online Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS) in December 2022 and April 2023. Of the 1 745 respondents, it is encouraging to note that more than two-thirds (69%) indicated that they were either in employment or

pursuing further studies. Furthermore, most of the employed respondents (70%) indicated that they were in a job relating to their field of study.

6.3. Student Housing

Student housing has initiated a waste management strategy to reduce waste reaching landfill sites through recycling. Discussions are underway with strategic partners to share the proceeds from the recycled waste generated in the residences, which will generate third stream income.

The Green Campus Initiative (GCI) Student Chapter and Water Saving Ambassadors drive responsible use of water in residences as a strategic response to sustainability. This includes the use of borehole water for the laundromats, as well as the design and maintenance of green spaces within the residences.

6.4. Student Health and Wellness

Student hunger

As part of its drive to address the pervasive and ongoing issue of student hunger - a challenge across the higher education sector nationally - the Nelson Mandela University nutrition project provides food packs for 1 100 students per month. Demand increases monthly and the SRC intervention of providing students in need with a meal per day during the exam period is welcomed. The Student Nutrition Working Group led by DVC: LT and Food Systems Working Group under DVC: ETP are seeking long-term sustainable solutions for student indigence.

Student wellness

To respond to the plight of mental health challenges experienced by staff and students, the LT Collab's Emthonjeni Student Wellness (ESW) collaborated with Student Health Services, Occupational Health, and Human Resources to conceptualise and co-create an integrated wellness strategy for the University.

ESW has revisited its counselling practice model to balance the number of students needing mental health support against the human and technological resources available. Additionally, using digital engagements, such as online programmes, brief videos, and self-help material on the ESW website, assists in reaching students and providing them with the necessary tools and resources for managing their own mental health, thereby enhancing self-sustaining behaviours.

Student Health Services (SHS) has been rendering mobile services at the shuttle stops to increase accessibility for students who are unable to book at the clinic.

6.5. Madibaz Sport

During this quarter, Madibaz Sport secured partnerships with various entities and received sponsorships from Standard Bank, Vitality Discovery, Cricket Eastern Cape and Eastern Province Cricket to host sporting events and contribute towards the Madibaz Cricket head coach's salary.

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

7.1. Human Resources (HR)

Employee Appointments and Exits

Between 1 January and 30 September 2023, the University appointed 127 new employees, 44 of whom were academic and 83 professional, administrative and support services (PASS). The former Dean of Students Mr Luthando Jack has been appointed as the institution's Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations, with effect from 1 November. Dr Bernard Sebake has been appointed as Acting Dean of Students until the end of December 2023.

Over this same period, 94 permanent and long-term contract staff members terminated their employment with the University. Of those who provided reasons for leaving, most reported receiving a better offer, followed by relocation.

Employee Health and Wellness

In stewarding the University's human resources, HR provides support for wellness programmes, services, and resources internally, and through external service provider Wellness@Work. Over this period, 531 employees (21% of the total population) used the Occupational Health Centre for counselling services or were referred by line managers. Most of those are from the Support Services portfolio, especially from the catering, cleaning, and horticulture departments.

7.2. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Services

Operating virtually has become a norm with increased automation and online services significantly accelerated by technological advancements. Cybersecurity capability is an extremely high priority for the institution due the increased use of digital platforms which creates opportunities for cybercriminals. Awareness campaigns are ongoing, and a range of solutions are being executed, to mitigate the attendant risks. The DHET has made funding available to improve cybersecurity, which will enable further progress in this area.

7.3. Infrastructure Services

Nelson Mandela University has won five national and international infrastructure awards for the new triple-storey E Block extensions to Ocean Sciences Campus. Specialised installation of the digital dome screen inside the concrete structure of the R86m new Science Centre on Ocean Sciences Campus is complete. The projection equipment is fully installed with final adjustments being made by the specialist Skyskan.

7.4. Electricity and Water Sustainability

MANCO and FFC have approved load-shedding mitigation plans and the next step is to complete the appointment of the contractor to attend to the photovoltaic (PV) installations scheduled to commence in the first quarter of 2024. Complete installation of the PV plant should generate a savings of around R10m per year in the cost of electricity as the combination of generators with PV will enable harvesting of energy generation during load-shedding. The solution will further include residences, which are not yet covered by generators.

South Campus now has three boreholes with sufficient volumes to provide for the entire campus. Estimates for the reticulation of the supply are underway, with final water quality test results still outstanding. Further work and proposals are underway to enable the Municipality to monitor the levels of our on-campus reservoir and replace the old supply line to the campus. Two 5 000L emergency water storage tanks have been installed at the Bird Street Campus. This is in addition to the commissioned borehole water supply at Second Avenue Campus with additional emergency water storage.

7.5 Campus Operations Management

Through collaborative consultations, the Multi-Campus Management Office for Missionvale, Second Avenue and Bird Street campuses has conceptualised and framed a multi-campus management model and system in alignment with the University's sustainability imperative. One of the proposed projects for the Virtual Academy includes the creation of a digital interface, which integrates multiple systems within the University that are crucial for the effective and efficient management of campuses.

With the tragic death of two students on our campuses in the past six months, the University is reassessing safety measures and infrastructure to ensure a safe, enabling environment. Several safety interventions have been introduced at Sanlam Student Village on South Campus, and the University has deployed the services of an external security service provider to monitor the streets of Summerstrand where many of our students live.

7.6. Communication and Marketing

Communication and Marketing won a global gold award for the 2023 graduation campaign in this year's Digital Communication Awards, hosted by Quadriga University in Germany. This campaign reached over 15m users and posts received over 1.9m engagements.

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

8.1. Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement (SRMA)

Bursaries, Scholarships and Engagement Funding

The University has allocated or administered bursaries and merit awards for 3 573 undergraduate and PG Dip/Cert, BTech and Advanced Diploma students. To date, it has also approved 2 971 out of 7 451 concession applications (40%).

The SRMA focuses specifically on so-called "missing middle" students and, increasingly, on postgraduate students with a target of R94m for this year. By the end of October 2023, nearly R98.3m had been mobilised, of which just under R68.3m had been received. By the start of November, 1 051 students had received bursaries from income mobilised through the Nelson Mandela University Trust. Most beneficiaries (94%) are Black students with slightly more female than male recipients.

The SRMA also mobilises funding for engagement projects, with a target of R12m for 2023. As at the end of October, close to R20m had been received.

8.2. Short-Term Financial Planning

Budget and Annual Performance Plan (APP)

As at the end of September, the forecast is an operating surplus of R8m (R11.8 budget) with R127.4m (R131.2 budget) surplus after forecasted investment income. A detailed financial report will be tabled at Council.

The DHET has advised the sector of budget cuts for 2023/24, including the MTEF (2024/25 - 2026/27) as required by Treasury. The University's share for 2023/24 was R4.56m on the block grant, R15m for SAIMI and R9.83m for the UCDG.

The 2024 Budget, approved by MANCO and considered by FFC on 9 November, and the Annual Performance Plan 2024 will be tabled at Council. A balanced operational budget for 2024 will be presented that includes a decrease of 0.9% in subsidy, a 4.6% increase in tuition fees, and 6.6% increase in student accommodation fees. The sector is required to cut 10% in budget allocated per year over the medium term or around R31bn, with most cuts coming from the Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (IEG) and NSFAS.

NSFAS funding

There are 18 793 NSFAS students on the institutional registration template. Mid-year, 455 students were defunded, leaving a shortfall of nearly R19m. Provision is included for a R15m bridging fund allocation for continued support for the NSFAS first-time entering students learning device programme, but this is dependent on certain factors.

8.3. Long-Term Financial Planning

To maintain institutional sustainability targets, the University's salary bill will need careful consideration, as will the approval of recurring resource requirements. The 2024 APP will be closely monitored and reported on, with the University confronting any challenges by means of its strategic approach to financial planning and management.

8.4. Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE)

The University's B-BBEE verification process is still underway, which includes a site visit scheduled for 13 November 2023. The current certificate expires on 14 December 2023. All B-BBEE strategic initiatives approved by MANCO in 2023 should be fully implemented by year end.

9. CONCLUSION

As with the broader national and international macro-environment, South Africa's higher education sector faces numerous headwinds, not least of which include ever-increasing financial constraints. It is thus vitally important that the University continues to foreground sustainability. We would like to salute our staff and students for having risen to the challenges emerging from operating within a turbulent and uncertain landscape. We also take this opportunity to thank Council for its careful guidance and wise stewardship over the course of 2023 and look forward to the benefits of this oversight being sustained into the future.