



**Vice-Chancellor's Quarterly Report to Council  
Quarter 2, 2021**

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**VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT TO COUNCIL  
SECOND QUARTER, 2021**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

As the country encounters the third wave of COVID-19, this quarterly report to Council reflects the ongoing efforts of the University to respond to the intensely disruptive impact of the pandemic on our academic core missions, operations and broader society. In line with our governance reporting framework, the theme for this second quarter report is inclusive student access for success, with a specific focus on interventions to achieve our enrolment targets and enhance student success within a highly volatile context. This report also provides Council with an overview of strategic highlights and challenges for this quarter, mindful of the inevitable pressures caused by the sharp increase in numbers of infections in our region, coupled with constrained resources due to adverse economic conditions. An additional complicating factor is the drought, with Nelson Mandela Bay Metro facing the worst water shortage in living history.

## **2. VISION 2030: STRATEGIC PLANNING**

The Vision 2030 Strategy served at Council for approval in the first quarter of 2021. We have reflected on lessons learnt over the course of the pandemic to date, which highlight how our current operating models, systems and processes need to be transformed to promote organisational resilience and deepen our transformative advances as we strive to promote the public good. As we prepare the ground for cascading Vision 2030 into all faculties and support service divisions, we have set up a [dedicated site](#) where stakeholders can locate the strategy and other supporting documents. We are furthermore developing strategy implementation guidelines, and updating the institutional monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework to promote strategy alignment at all levels.

### **2.1 Medical School**

The second quarter was momentous from the perspective of our new Medical School transitioning from being a dream to becoming a reality on our Missionvale Campus. The first class of our six-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) qualification started in March 2021 with a small, internal Oath Taking ceremony on the Missionvale Campus. The initial cohort of 50 was drawn from a pool of more than 5000 applicants. With applications now open for 2022, next year's intake will be increased to 80 as per the accreditation decision by the Health Professions Council for South Africa (HPCSA).

The Medical School is set to make a tangible contribution to building skills and expanded capacity for pro-poor and accessible healthcare service delivery. The community-based approach is aimed at graduating socially conscious medical doctors who can compete globally, but who also have a deep passion to change the lives of poor communities through an emphasis on preventive and promotive health.

Within the current context of resource constraints, careful attention has been devoted to renovating and upgrading existing facilities at Missionvale Campus and Dora Nginja

hospital. The focus has also been on how these investments can strengthen the Academic Health Complex as part of the University-Province partnership.

## **2.2 Ocean Sciences**

The University continues to expand its international partnership footprint in ocean sciences. This year marks the fifth year of FishFORCE, a collaborative project established within the Faculty of Law in 2016 with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. FishFORCE's work addresses several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably those relating to eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting decent work and economic growth, as well as life below water.

The South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI) hosted a webinar in June focused on investing in the ocean economy. With unemployment at a record high of 32.6 percent in South Africa, the maritime sector has the potential to create jobs through the sustainable development of national maritime industries. It was also noted that 90 percent of products traded globally are transported through African seas and this poses a significant opportunity for the growth of the South African economy.

We are proud to report that the first two graduates in our new Bachelor of Technology in Marine Engineering obtained their qualification during the Autumn graduation in April. A total of 70 students are enrolled in this exciting undergraduate qualification, which equips graduates to apply engineering sciences to the development, design, operation and maintenance of ships, yachts and related watercraft, including propulsion and on-board systems.

## **2.3 Revitalising the Humanities**

This strategic trajectory continues to take firmer shape with an ever-growing intellectual culture aimed at enhancing analytical rigour, vibrancy and cohesion. As part of this endeavour, each school in the Faculty of Humanities will host a Curriculum Revitalisation Conversation with the first hosted by the School of Visual and Performing Arts on 20 May 2021 with the theme *Learning from our Context: Revitalising and Decolonising the Visual and Performing Arts at Nelson Mandela University*.

Alongside the focus on decoloniality, indigenous knowledges and interrogating Western hegemonies, other exciting new areas of study and research are emerging in the Faculty of Humanities, such as digital humanities and animation. Plans are also underway to drive capacity enhancement programmes to improve academic qualifications and research productivity. The Council-funded Professors Project will support the attraction of professors in transdisciplinary research priority areas such as African archives and heritage studies, digital humanities and linguistic diversity, entrepreneurship and innovation in the arts and humanities, philosophy in Africa, and governance and public leadership.

The Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies (TIMS) hosted a virtual workshop on 13 April to identify and explore fresh lines of inquiry to inform the Mandela University identity and posture, while also configuring Critical Mandela Studies. This workshop benefitted

from the insights of Professor Verne Harris from the Nelson Mandela Foundation who proposed six lines of inquiry within the rubric of Mandela Studies, namely: the longer histories of the Eastern Cape before colonisation; the work of feminist economists in the context of an embrace of neoliberalism in South Africa during the transition to democracy; patriarchies, modernisms and other intersecting vectors of oppressive power; histories of non-racialism and black consciousness; Mandela and the arts; and the commodification of Mandela.

On 5 June 2021, we officially launched the NRF (SARChI) chair in African Feminist Imaginations headed by Professor Pumla Dineo Gqola. The purpose of this Chair is to shift how we think about gender power and women's contributions in the world, including generating research on the archive of African women's intellectual and political work as key thinkers, theorists and figures in the liberation struggle, decoloniality and transformation. This new DSI-NRF SARChI Chair has hit the ground running with book publications, public engagements and the establishment of wide-ranging national and international networks.

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

Learning and teaching at Nelson Mandela University continue to address the challenges associated with the later start to the academic year. New students have been oriented to university life and learning online almost immediately after final assessments for the 2020 academic year were completed.

#### **3.1 Hybrid Learning**

Given the need to keep students and staff safe during the pandemic, 65 percent of our programmes are being delivered fully online, while the remainder are following a hybrid mode with content teaching online, and experiential learning "mask-to-mask" on campus or in the workplace.

The online Learning and Teaching (LT) component for fully online or hybrid programmes includes digital materials, resources and activities on the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS), as well as lectures and flipped class sessions via MS Teams. Tutorials and supplemental instruction lessons are also conducted online.

We will review the trajectory of the pandemic and may offer more on-campus academic activities, especially for first years, in the second semester depending on how the third wave of the pandemic unfolds. However, the flipped classroom approach will be retained for the future as will online tutorials. The need to co-ordinate online sessions, workload and assessments is critical.

Staff capacity development and upskilling initiatives on techniques relating to hybrid learning and teaching are in place and they include "How-2" videos and documents, discussions and webinars. A UNESCO-funded project has made it possible for senior

students to be trained as ambassadors for open educational resources (OER) to assist academics in sourcing OERs and e-textbooks.

### **3.2 Student Academic Development and Support**

In 2021, we transitioned to virtual welcoming ceremonies and revamped the online orientation programme, which saw a participation rate of 80 percent compared to an average of 60 percent in previous years. Each student is connected to a First Year Success (FYS) buddy group facilitated by a senior student in the same faculty. An enhanced website with many online resources is another mechanism to connect with the FYS team.

To equip students to engage effectively in an online LT and assessment environment, we have multiple online resources that students can access at any time, including multilingual support. Digi-Buddies and e-technologists provide support and capacity building for students in faculties, with all first years enrolled in a computer literacy module, and the LT Collab has a range of self-help online resources.

Success rates and student progress are monitored throughout the year using an integrated data tracking and early warning system (called RADAR). The system monitors student performance and optimises early intervention strategies to support academically vulnerable students. Academics also monitor student engagement in learning through analysing activity on the Moodle LMS module site. It is encouraging to note that, in 2020, the University achieved a success rate of 84 percent (compared to 79% in 2019) despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the reasons for this significant increase in success rate need to be established through research, the widespread implementation of continuous assessment made it possible for students to be given several opportunities for assessment and this could have contributed to this improvement. The Learning and Teaching Committee will be approving consolidated guidelines for continuous assessment and e-assessment in June to promote consistency and academic integrity.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need to revisit rules, policies and our student disciplinary code in the light of the significantly expanded use of online LT and assessment. We also need a clear policy on the use of WhatsApp as a communication medium.

### **3.3 Ongoing Impact of COVID-19**

There are indications that students struggle to manage their time and to balance all their academic requirements while dealing with the psychosocial challenges of this difficult time – and many staff are also experiencing similar wellness challenges. The pandemic increasingly shows how critical it is to keep students and staff well informed, and attention must be given to the adaptation of workload models for academics.

Poor network coverage and connectivity, especially in rural areas, is a national problem that needs to be addressed. Sustainable solutions to the present data costs of providing all

students with 30GB of data each month are being sought, especially with mid-year assessments looming.

#### **4 INNOVATIVE SCHOLARSHIP CULTURE THAT GENERATES KNOWLEDGE RECOGNISED FOR ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABILITY**

Despite the increase in COVID-19 infections, the University remains focused on keeping staff and students safe as we continue with our academic core missions amid exceptional circumstances.

##### **4.1 Postgraduate and Postdoctoral Funding**

Access and success for postgraduate students has been enhanced through funding for scholarships and research capacity development interventions. Overall, 326 Honours, 574 Masters and 299 Doctoral scholarships were awarded as of 21 May 2021 with funding from Council, the National Research Foundation (NRF) and other external funders. This represented a total of 1 199 awards comprising of 80 percent Black (African, Coloured, Indian and Asian) and 61 percent female students. Uptake of the awards is ongoing with 542 (45%) of the 1 199 scholarships taken up. Of the 542 recipients who have taken up the awards, 70 percent are Black, and 58 percent are female students.

More than 78 research development workshops have been scheduled for 2021 and 20 were delivered virtually during this quarter. The Unit for Statistical Consultation (USC) offers ongoing training and held two virtual five-day block courses. Weekend sessions have been scheduled to accommodate part-time students and a Moodle site is available. Individual consultations via electronic platforms have continued, with 47 postgraduate students and researchers assisted in this manner.

Nelson Mandela University continues to benefit from national initiatives designed to ensure that early career academics receive the support and training needed to attain higher degrees. There are 18 active Thuthuka grant holders, of which 78 percent are Black and 56 percent are women. The Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP) currently funds seven academics, three of whom are women.

##### **4.2 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings**

This is the first year Mandela University has participated in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings and our submissions were based on an extensive mapping exercise across all faculties and departments. Based on the results, three United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were chosen for submission: Good Health and Wellbeing [SDG 3], Life Below Water [SDG 14] and Life on Land [SDG 15], as well as the compulsory submission required for Partnerships for the Goals [SDG 17]. The ranking report shows that Mandela University ranked fourth in South Africa, with our strongest ranking in SDG 14 (Life Below Water).



### **4.3 Internationalisation**

Due to a variety of challenges linked to the pandemic, international student enrolments have significantly declined over the last two years. This affects international study abroad and exchange students who travel to South Africa and spend a semester at the University. More than 130 international study abroad and exchange students had to cancel their enrolment for the second semester, leading to a revenue shortfall of R1.4-million.

International student enrolments decreased by 15.1 percent in 2021. Efforts to address this included implementing various concessions for international students, including a range of payment options. Of the 888 international students who registered by 30 April 2021, 212 students met the criteria for concessions.

### **4.4 Library and Information Services**

In support of student access for success, more than R13-million has been spent to date on online resources for student use. Other measures to enhance student success include extending loan periods for prescribed textbooks, the repeated offering of orientation and online training sessions for students who registered late, and 24/7-hour access to online resources. Access to core prescribed electronic books remains a challenge as publishers are making it difficult for libraries to create multiple user access to high demand reading material by imposing user restrictions and inflating the prices of their content. Benchmarking will be done to assess how other South African universities are dealing with these challenges.

## **5 ENHANCING STUDENT LIVING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

### **5.1 Student Housing and Transport**

Out of 3 609 residence beds on our Gqeberha and George campuses, 1 120 first year and 2 286 senior students arrived, with 203 non-arrivals or vacancies. Out of 12 842 accredited beds at off-campus residences, 10 022 students were placed, of which 2 851 were first year students. All the living and learning programmes are being held online to ensure that students continue to access these important support services.

The need to be able to work and study remotely becomes even more important as COVID-19 infections rise. Nonetheless, we are exploring safe transport options for students who need to travel to our campuses to engage in online learning and assessments in our general computer labs.

### **5.2 Universal Accessibility and Disability Unit**

To date, 307 students have disclosed their disabilities, compared to 386 in 2020. First Rand Foundation donated nearly R3-million for postgraduate student bursaries, assistive devices and equipment. A coaching and mentoring programme for students with disabilities has started and a manual on *Student Success and Transitioning Pathways* at Mandela University was developed. A voice typing programme was also developed to assist students who are using scribes for writing. The Unit hosted a Special Schools Strategic Workshop and donated assistive devices to Northern Lights Primary School in Gqeberha. Newly appointed

postdoctoral fellow, Dr Desire Chiwandire, is working with UADS, the Universal Access Working Group, and the Transformation Office to advance the inclusion of people living with disabilities at Mandela University.

### **5.3 Student Health Services**

COVID-19 screening numbers are increasing on all campuses, with the total number of 228 730 students screened in 2021, as at 15 June. Of these, there were 183 persons under investigation (PUIs) and 101 contacts. Nine students tested positive for COVID-19 in May and 22 thus far in June, bringing the total for 2021 to 33 students.

A major risk to the University is that the District DOH has not established and identified quarantine sites within the Metro. To address this, the Student Housing department has secured venues at guesthouses in the Metro to accommodate this need, but this poses some risks as there are no nursing staff at these venues. Student Health Services (SHS) is currently monitoring the students telephonically. All professional nurses within SHS have also been trained as vaccinators.

### **5.4 Student Governance**

SRC elections were held online for the first time in 2021 and this practice will be continued since it improved the participation rate of students with an electoral poll of above 30 percent. A comprehensive SRC induction workshop was held from 3-5 May and SRC members have been deployed to various University statutory committees. The investiture of the SRC was on 13 May, with strategic planning concluded on 28 May. The University meets the SRC every week and holds ongoing discussions with student organisations. It has also created task teams to address specific issues, such as the financial aid task team.

### **5.5 Student Entrepreneurship and Development**

As part of our efforts to expand the University's focus on student entrepreneurship, SEDA has granted the university R4-million funding to establish a Madibaz Entrepreneurship Incubator. Planning for the roll out has started.

All student development initiatives including Beyond the Classroom, Leaders for Change and Ebuhlanti Men Leadership programme have commenced, with groups from Gqeberha and George campuses combined as these have migrated online.

### **5.6 Madibaz Sports**

Various sporting codes have started to return to train and play, namely, rugby, football, water polo, netball, athletics and swimming. All codes are required to apply for permission to access facilities and campus before events.

### **5.7 Student Career Services**

The Career Services department has undertaken a wide range of initiatives aimed at providing funding, employment and placement opportunities for final year students. To date, this has included obtaining funding for 125 "missing middle" students with historical

debt, undertaking surveys on both student experiential learning and satisfaction with career services, and presenting the GradExpo online in May.

## **6 TRANSFORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE THAT PROMOTES DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION**

### **6.1 Repositioning Engagement**

The Institutional Engagement Forum was due to have its first meeting in June. Driven by the Engagement Office, the Terms of Reference and proposed membership of the forum have been completed and this Office is also mapping all engagement projects and initiatives within the Engagement and Transformation Portfolio (ETP). MANCO adopted the university stakeholder engagement strategy formulation process in April and the development of a Stakeholder-Community Engagement Digital Tool is underway, led by ICT and supported by a multidisciplinary team.

The COVID-19 Coordinating Committee (CCC) continues its work, with a strong focus on the vaccination rollout plan. The Hubs of Convergence (HoC) response to COVID-19 through the Community Convergence Workstream (CCW) falls under the following thematic hubs, namely, Food Sovereignty, Community and Knowledge Communication and Application. The Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training's (CIPSET) research work on the solidarity economy continues, co-hosting five webinars this quarter.

The University is working with Ubuntu Pathways on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) around various areas of possible collaboration. Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Engagement and Transformation Prof Andre Keet and HoC leader Dr Bruce Damons visited the centre in May. The Ubuntu Campus has a state-of-the-art paediatric-HIV medical facility, an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programme, a primary school providing world-class education for 222 children, and a Job Skills Training (JST) programme, which provides vocational training and placement support to youth who are not pursuing university studies.

The Centre for Women and Gender Studies (CWGS) spearheaded the celebration of 150 years of Charlotte Maxeke's idea and life in May, in collaboration with the Chair in African Feminist Imaginations, the Charlotte Maxeke Institute, and the Charlotte Maxeke Residence. Furthermore, CWGS partnered with the Faculty of Education in hosting a conversation between internationally renowned author, Dr Sindiwe Magona, and the new Chief Albert Luthuli Research Chair at UNISA, Professor Puleng Segalo on 15 June 2021. This conversation foregrounded intergenerational knowledge transfer mechanisms through *amabali*, *iintsomi* and endogenous principles, which also link children's education to the broader conversations around belonging, memory and voice.

### **6.2 Transformation and Social Justice**

The Transformation Office is currently conducting advocacy work related to Equality Promotion and Social Inclusion (EPSI). Consultation sessions are being facilitated with key institutional stakeholders regarding two equality-related policies, namely: Racism and Racial Discrimination, and Gender Equality.

Training programmes for GBV inquiry panel members and investigators have been concluded with a focus on GBV, sexual harassment, equality-related complaints and social justice mediation. Anti-GBV advocacy work is ongoing through the creation of videos, the use of social media platforms, the facilitation of discussion sessions, and support in dealing with GBV-related complaints. In addition, the HIV and AIDS Research Unit is finalising Short Learning Programmes (SLPs) on GBV advocacy and workplace wellness; and continues to provide educational material on GBV and HIV and AIDS.

The Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (*CriSHET*) has made significant progress with the Online Resource for Higher Education Transformation (ORHET), through populating its archives and creating content for the blog. *CriSHET* co-hosted the third Africa and Knowledge seminar this quarter, in collaboration with the Centre for Philosophy in Africa, the Faculty of Humanities, and the Emengini Institute for Comparative Global Studies. Prof Chielozona Eze spoke on *Nelson Mandela and the Topology of African Encounter with the World*.

The Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD) supported the national Anti-Racist Network South Africa (ARNSA) and the Israel Apartheid Week Campaign. Professor Christi van der Westhuizen wrote a piece on democracy and the Constitution for *The Conversation* to coincide with Freedom Day in April, which led to further TV and radio interviews. CANRAD is also partnering with UNAKO to spearhead various youth development initiatives, including successfully creating more than a dozen on-demand learning videos on topics such as active citizenship, human rights, and social justice which have reached over 400 people.

The Chair for Youth Unemployment, Employability and Empowerment has made excellent progress on the DHET-funded Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges Research Programme. This has highlighted the number of eligible candidates turned away from TVET colleges due to space shortages and the urgent need to expand critical TVET scholarship in developing contexts. Monthly roundtables are held to support mature TVET students with developing Masters' and PhD proposals and, together with the Faculty of Education, the Chair is hosting the first NRF TVET postdoctoral fellow.

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

The second quarter of 2021 was a period when the University's interventions to promote student access for success in the virtual realm bore fruit, with numerous ICT interventions enabling University life to continue working across a wide range of areas.

### **7.1 Virtual graduation**

The University hosted autumn graduation sessions for its 6 072 graduates from 22-30 April 2021. Graduating students were issued with secure digital graduation certificates in addition to printed copies, using a system that was developed in-house.

The University awarded three honorary doctoral degrees to prominent individuals who have made significant contributions to society, namely: Professor Martin Tsamenyi in the Faculty of Law, Ms Mmatshilo Motsei in the Faculty of Health Sciences, and Ms Gloria T Serobe in the Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences.

## **7.2 Student access and enrolment**

After a year of adapting to COVID-19, the University was better able to assist students with remote access and enrolment. Initiatives which helped students transition from admission to enrolment included: online faculty presentations with groups of first year students to guide them through curriculum choices; telephonic support offered by the Contact Centre; and Skype calls to students. The University website was zero rated to enable students to complete online registration without incurring data costs.

Despite these readiness plans, several students had difficulties with registration due to delays in confirming funding by NSFAS and waiting for outcomes of applications for financial concessions. The late finalisation of 2020 academic results also led to delays in admitting senior students for postgraduate programmes.

An Emergency Enrolment Management Task Team (EEMTT) chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Engagement and Transformation, was established and met daily in April to address registration bottlenecks. The plan is for the EEMTT to become an institutional standing Enrolment Management Committee to promote an exceptional student access and enrolment experience and, in so doing, position Mandela University as a destination of choice for talented students.

## **7.3 2021 Academic Calendar**

The 2021 Academic Calendar was adjusted by two weeks and approved by the Executive Committee of Senate to make provision for the delayed start. Despite the overlap of academic years, the assessment and re-assessment cycles were concluded successfully for both continuous assessment as well as for the remaining examinable modules for the 2020 academic year. Most End of Module assessments (EMAs) were conducted online, but a few were held in-person (mask-to-mask) with strict adherence to COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

## **7.4 COVID-19 Management and Vaccination Rollout**

The Coronavirus Task Team (CTT) meets weekly to ensure staff, students and visitors comply with COVID-19 regulations and to roll out the institutional vaccination programme, at a potential cost of around R14-million. The National Department of Health (DoH) has accredited the University as a public vaccination site for employees, students, and members of the public residing in Summerstrand. This aligns well with the University's ongoing externally focused efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in collaboration with government, the private sector and civil society organisations.

The Pfizer vaccine will be provided, a two-dose injection administered 42 days apart. After two days of vaccination roll out, that started on 14 June 2021, the University had

administered 96 vaccines, of which 32 were employees and 64 were members of the public over the age of 60. The George Campus is still awaiting its final accreditation approval from the Western Cape Department of Health before it can also support the national rollout programme.

It has been a source of concern that some students and staff have been neglecting to observe COVID-19 safety precautions, which could endanger themselves and others. To encourage active reporting of non-compliance, the University has launched an online COVID-19 “whistle-blower” tool. This will be accompanied by a communication campaign to raise awareness and discourage non-compliance.

### **7.5 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

ICT has fast-tracked the automation of learning, teaching, research, engagement and work processes. Attention is being devoted to improving the student access and enrolment value chain and the following projects will be implemented in the near future, namely: the ITS Chatbot to improve communication to prospective and current students; and the customer relations management (CRM) solution for the contact centre and central timetabling. The digital inclusion scheme continues and close to 1 500 laptops were issued in April to NSFAS-funded first-time entering students.

### **7.6 Communication and Marketing**

Communication over web and social media platforms during the COVID-19 period has seen institutional content on Facebook displayed to over 28-million users, 3.4-million Twitter users, 2.7-million Instagram users, and video clips viewed by 1.3-million users with over 200 000 views. Work is underway to better align the messaging of Communication and Marketing with the strategic intentions and academic priorities of the University.

### **7.7 Human Resources**

The Human Resources Directorate is partnering with the Faculty of Science to pilot the new e-recruitment system Talent Genie. From January to April 2021, 60 new appointments were made comprising 22 Academics and 38 PASS staff, all from the under-represented groups.

An across-the-board 3.3% (CPI) annual salary increase was concluded for both the PL5-17 and PL1-4 cohorts.

### **7.8 Operations and Support Services**

Missionvale Campus security upgrades, valued at just over R12-million, are nearing completion. The tender to enhance security to the Summerstrand South, North and Ocean Sciences Campus cluster with respect to entrances, access roads and the perimeter fence, has been awarded. The development of the transportation hub, which will facilitate the orderly control of public transport to the Summerstrand South, North and Ocean Sciences Campus cluster is almost complete.

With about 12 percent water remaining in Nelson Mandela Bay’s dams and Day Zero for Gqeberha predicted from July onwards, a University technical team has been established

to explore measures to mitigate this risk. Plans include installing water tanks across campuses, trucking water in, safely shutting down taps to protect pipes, and launching a “save-water-now” campaign. Water metres have been introduced at 54 different sites, including our residences, to measure consumption to ensure that we do not use more than the present limit of 50 litres per person per day. The technical team is also reviewing emergency fire management measures and preparing prevention and mitigation readiness plans.

## **8 ENHANCING LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND RESPONSIBLE RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**

The material financial and sustainability risks of COVID-19 are likely to have a significant impact on revenue as well as direct and indirect costs.

### **8.1 Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement**

The Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement (SRMA) office continues to provide operational and strategic support to the Nelson Mandela University Trust. In November 2020, the Trust adopted several interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic downturn on resource mobilisation. These have been steadily implemented in 2021.

From January to mid-May 2021, donations amounting to more than R20-million have been paid for bursaries and scholarships. Donations to the amount of R63.6-million are still to be paid by SETAs, government departments, trusts and private donors.

### **8.2 NSFAS**

A total of 22 267 students were loaded with NSFAS-approved statuses, including those who have not registered or taken up offers at Mandela University. In total, 16 223 students registered and 230 cancelled, leaving 15 993 registered NSFAS-funded students to date. The University received a total of 878 NSFAS appeal cases for 2021. We also continue to support NSFAS-funded students on a learning device programme with a R15-million bridging fund, on a recovery basis.

### **8.3 Financial Concessions**

Beside bursary and NSFAS funding, the University applies concessions approved by MANCO and consulted with the SRC to identify qualifying students who are unfunded and whose family income does not exceed R600 000. A record number of 7 688 student concession applications were processed, and 6 809 were approved. The sustainability of these concessions is reliant on the University ensuring that only academically deserving, financially needy students are considered and that the conditions of the concessions are honoured. In addition, the University allocated bursaries and merit awards to 3 439 students in under- and postgraduate qualifications not eligible for postgraduate research scholarships (PGRS).

The decline in postgraduate enrolments is of concern due to its impact on future subsidy generation. The University is implementing various strategies with an out-of-budget allocation of R10-million recently approved by the FFC from reserves towards the funding of M&D students in 2021. This will be reprioritised within the University's operational budget baseline in 2022.

The December 2021 Ministerial Statement subsidy allocation letter from the Minister indicated a 2.38 percent increase on the 2020 original block grant in subsidy, which was welcomed compared to the forecasted dire scenario of either a five percent cut or a zero percent increase. However, subsequent to the National Budget Speech, the budget of the DHET had to be reprioritised to fund the shortfall in NSFAS funding for first-time entering students for 2021.

We recently received an addendum to the Ministerial Statement, which indicates that we cannot expect CPI, let alone real growth increases, in the mid-term. This together with capping of fees, means that the most significant streams of funding will be limited, which requires a careful reconsideration of resource allocation and expenditure. The higher education sector, as with the broader national and international economy, will be under significant fiscal pressure in the foreseeable future and careful consideration will need to be given when approving recurrent resourcing requirements.

The consolidated financial statements will be shared with and reported on at Council. Forecasts as at the end of April 2021 anticipate an operating deficit of R20.6-million, with a R10.8-million surplus after forecasted investment income. Key financial assumptions underpinning this forecast will be reviewed and updated monthly as we continue to navigate the financial impact of COVID-19.

BBBEE remains high on the agenda of executive management and the University is preparing for an early verification based on the 2020 financial year. Various workshops, beginning with senior management, will be rolled out to advance collective ownership of BBBEE, including its spirit, purpose and technicalities, so that the University system responds appropriately to this important transformation imperative.

## **9 CONCLUSION**

The University continues to experience challenges due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 pandemic now entering its third wave and aggravated by the prevailing water crisis in the Nelson Mandela Metro. The unpredictable and volatile external environment demands that the University embraces agility and responsiveness to promote long-term sustainability, while we seek to accelerate transformative advances in pursuit of more humane and socially just world. We pay tribute to our students, employees and communities who continue to bravely navigate this uncharted terrain and we are grateful to Council for their unwavering support of our collective efforts to promote student access for success while simultaneously prioritising the wellbeing of all our stakeholders.