



Vice-Chancellor's Quarterly Report to Council

Quarter 1, 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

For some time now, higher education nationally and globally has been in a disruptive state of flux and uncertainty, which is calling into question the very role and purpose of higher education. The constant and ever-increasing pace of change nationally and globally acts as a driver for universities to fundamentally revisit their mandates and academic missions as a key driver of long-term sustainability. The University has managed to maintain continuity and stability despite the multiple challenges that permeate our society and planet, not least of which include deep inequalities and persistent poverty, youth unemployment, the digital divide, energy, water and food insecurity, and flailing economies.

As Nelson Mandela University embarks on a third academic year in a world deeply disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, the health and safety of our students and staff remain paramount. Mindful that new variants of the coronavirus may emerge, and others may follow, we continue to advocate for students and staff to get vaccinated.

In alignment with our reporting cycle, this report focuses on our interventions to promote student access for success in line with our mission to offer life-changing and humanising educational experiences. We also provide an overview of strategic highlights and challenges since the last Council meeting in December 2021 as these relate to our Vision 2030 focus areas and enablers.

2. VISION 2030 STRATEGY

Various interventions are underway to cascade Vision 2030 within every executive management portfolio and faculty. This is guided and informed by strategic planning guidelines approved by executive management in 2021. We are aiming to ensure that the various portfolios and faculties will have developed Vision 2030-aligned strategies by the end of the second quarter to promote strategy-aligned budgeting and resource allocation as from 2023.

As Council is aware, the Medical School, Ocean Sciences, and Revitalising the Humanities are three key strategic trajectories we are driving as we cascade our future-focused Vision 2030 Strategy.

2.1. Medical School

Following the momentous launch of our Medical School in November 2021, the University has welcomed its second first-year cohort comprising 80 students. The medical programme is progressing well, with 49 of the first cohort of 50 MBChB students progressing to their second year of study. The commendable pass rate of 98% is remarkable given that assessment processes were externally moderated to entrench a high standard. In 2023, it is envisaged that the school will expand with a further intake of 100 first year MBChB students.

The Medical School is preparing for the follow-up HPCSA accreditation visit for clinical training years four to six. The programme development team is progressing swiftly with developing the M Med programmes. Remuneration does, however, remain a challenge in attracting suitable candidates for key clinical positions. To this end, we will continue our efforts to mobilise resources for the medical school from diverse sources of revenue, both public and private.

Nelson Mandela University was afforded the opportunity to collaborate with the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) to launch their annual report on 11 March 2022, with support from the Vice Chancellors' office. The INCB is an independent and quasi-judicial monitoring body that implements the United Nations international drug control conventions. The Executive Dean of Health Sciences has been serving on the Board since May 2020 and will continue to do so until 2025. The significance of this is that Nelson Mandela University is once again being positioned at the forefront of tackling global health challenges.

2.2. Ocean Sciences

The Institute for Coastal and Marine Research (CMR) contributes significantly towards the University's Ocean Sciences Strategy. This entity plays a coordinating role for transdisciplinary coastal sciences research at local, regional, national, and international scale, involving internal and external collaborators and stakeholders. These partnerships include collaborations with regional institutions in the Southwestern Indian Ocean in domains such as marine ecology, oceanography, climate change, the blue economy, law of the seas, and ocean cultures.

The Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences is focusing on the roll-out of Masters of Maritime Management in 2023, while the Faculty of Education is planning to offer a BEd SP FET Marine Studies qualification. Similarly, the CMR is currently spearheading the development of an international Masters degree in Ocean Sciences involving various faculties to be offered in collaboration with six other South African universities.

Our Infrastructure Services and Space Optimisation team is making excellent progress in constructing flexibly designed, state-of-the-art facilities on the Ocean Sciences Campus. The construction projects currently underway include the extension of laboratories, office space, and a dive tank in the E block and the Science Centre. These projects are planned for completion in July and November 2022 respectively.

2.3. Revitalising the Humanities

The revitalisation of the humanities has received a significant boost with a research grant of R4 000 000 from the National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences. The grant was awarded to the SARChI Chair in Identities and Social Cohesion, Professor Andrea Hurst, and provides for the appointment of eight postdoctoral fellows over a two-year period.

The Faculty of Humanities presented its Strategic Vision and Plan, developed over the course of 2021, to its Faculty Management Committee in January 2022. This strategy aims to operationalise strategic priorities in the Faculty's core academic missions. The Faculty deliberately considers Africa as a source of knowledge production to diversify and deepen our arts, humanities, and social sciences canon and scientific knowledge base respectively.

Aligned with the Faculty of Humanities' strategic thematic area of Digital Humanities, the Faculty celebrated *International Mother Tongue Day* in February by hosting a seminar *Writing Legal Judgments in isiXhosa: Indigenous Languages and the Law*. This recognises the role of digital resources to advance multilingualism, support quality education, and inspire social cohesion.

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

Nelson Mandela University welcomed its new and returning students for the 2022 academic year with online ceremonies held on 28 and 29 January. This was held in tandem with a virtual orientation programme from 25 January to 13 February. In the build-up to the official University Welcoming Ceremony, students and their parents or guardians were invited to attend a virtual faculty meet-and-greet session, hosted by the Executive Dean of their respective faculties, which included an opportunity to meet lecturers. The First-Year Success (FYS) Orientation programme started on 31 January and lectures began on 14 February 2022.

3.1. Registration and enrolments

As at 13 March 2022, the University's registration statistics surpassed the targeted 30 953 with a total 31 757 students having registered. Of these, 28 601 are undergraduate and 2 909 are postgraduate students.

Registration of first-time entering (FTEN) students is at a record high of 8 633, which exceeds our target of 7 000 for the 2022 academic year. This points to the effectiveness of the measures put in place last year through the Enrolment Management Task Team to improve our access and enrolment value chain and bodes well from a sustainability perspective given the additional tuition fee and input subsidy income these enrolments will generate.

Table 1: Overview of enrolments as at 13 March 2022 compared to the same date in 2021

Qualification Type	2021 Actual End of 2021	2021 Enrolment Plan Target	2021 Deviation from Target	2022 Actual 13 March 2022	2022 Enrolment Plan Target	2022 Deviation from Target
UG Diploma or Certificate	10 837	10 051	8%	12 275	10 066	21,9%
Advanced Diploma	1 765	1 080	63%	1 713	1 160	47,7%
UG Degree	13 893	14 540	-4%	14 613	14 835	-1,5%
Total UG	26 495	25 671	3%	28 601	26 061	9,7%
PG to Masters	1 285	1 668	-23%	1 323	1 714	-22,8%
Masters	1 567	2 118	-26%	1 181	2 171	-45,6%
Doctoral	616	680	-9%	405	700	-42,1%
Total PG	3 468	4 466	-22%	2 909	4 585	-36,6%
Occasional	160	324	-51%	247	307	-19,5%
Grand Total	30 123	30 461	-1%	31 757	30 953	2,6%
First-time entering UG	5 972	6 820	-12%	8 633	7 000	23%
Extended programmes	2 956	2 435	21%	3 651	2 698	35%

From the above, it is evident that postgraduate enrolments remain a source of concern and may not reach the 2022 target of 4585. However, many postgraduate applications still need to be finalised and registrations for research-based Masters' and doctoral qualifications will remain open throughout the year. A major barrier for many students who qualify for postgraduate studies is that they cannot register and take up postgraduate scholarships due to historic debt. We are currently analysing this in more detail to explore strategies to address this challenge. Some recommendations for increasing postgraduate enrolment that are at various stages of implementation include annual marketing and recruitment campaigns to recruit talented postgraduate students and mobilising resources for financial assistance at levels that will enhance postgraduate student access for success.

3.2. Learning and Teaching

Depending on the trajectory of the pandemic, we are poised to adjust the mix of online and mask-to-mask academic activities throughout the year. Learning and teaching delivery will differ from programme to programme. In general, some will be fully online, while others will be a blend of content taught online and in-person, mask-to-mask and experiential learning (for example, laboratory and studio work, practical sessions, and clinical training). In the Faculty of Education, for example, a multi-modal School Based Learning (SBL) component is offered to students so they may remain at home-town schools and use live streaming of class lessons for training and assessment.

Students who learn online do require a laptop or desktop computer, smartphone, reasonably stable internet connection, and a place to effectively learn online from home (remotely). Students who do not have access to all these requirements will need to be in Gqeberha or George to use the University's general and specialised computer labs and

WiFi on campus and in accredited off-campus student residences, so that they can engage in online learning.

3.3. Digital Learning

The Digital Learning Experience Design and Innovation cluster (LXD) is responsible for all physical access to the learning systems of the University. Delays in student registration in 2022 meant that access to the learning systems had to be made possible, even if a student was unregistered and did not know which modules they should attend online. The LXD cluster is central to the practical and operational aspects of ensuring this access, extending to the production of “how-to” resources, training webinars, and designing communications to alert students and staff to the access processes.

Upgrading the Moodle Learning Management System in the first week of February was the first step towards automating many manual processes related to student access. This will save staff many hours and, more importantly, contribute to a seamless digital journey from registration into the virtual classroom.

3.4. LT Collab Student Development and Support

Student access and success are a continuous journey encompassing a holistic approach to academic achievement, student life, career success and self-actualisation. The immediate focus for the 2022 academic year includes the activities outlined below for the Learning Development Cluster within the LT Collab.

Academic Lifeskills Management (ALM)

ALM targets the extended programme students and supports them in transitioning into the University through life skills that augment their academic studies.

First-Year Success (FYS)

FYS aims to support access and transition from secondary education into the Nelson Mandela University study environment. This has five focus areas: pre-university connection, VC's and faculty welcome ceremonies, faculty academic and social orientation, and FYS orientation Thrive@Mandela. Using these platforms, the FYS team began interacting with provisionally accepted students from September 2021, and records indicate that more than 30 000 people accessed these platforms from the beginning of January to the middle of February 2022. The team believes that these efforts contributed to the higher number of first-year students registered in 2022.

Supplemental Instruction (SI)

SI plans for 2022 include the initial SI Leader Training, which took place in February, conducted online for all Gqeberha based SI leaders and mask-to-mask in George. Research has indicated that SI is an impactful intervention in enhancing student academic performance in high-risk, gateway modules.

Student Success Coaching (SSC)

A review of the SSC sub-cluster was held during November 2021 to improve processes and procedures. Research conducted in the first quarter of 2022 supports inclusive student access for success by flagging potential risks among the first-year cohort of students based on school quintile grouping and matric results mapped against admissions requirements. Sharing this information with faculties and learning and teaching development units promotes the early identification of potentially vulnerable students who would benefit the most from targeted developmental support.

3.5. Teaching Development

The academic induction programme, Beginning Your Journey at Nelson Mandela University, focuses on empowering newly appointed academics and postgraduate assistants to enable student success through their learning, teaching and assessment practices. In February 2022, 27 participants registered for this programme. Other programmes to enhance teaching development include the Early Career Academics Advancement Programme (ECAAP) and the Teaching Enhancement Programme (TEP).

Nelson Mandela University has been invited to take part in the international Problem-Based Learning as part of the FOREST21 project. FOREST21 strengthens the capacity of South African universities to produce exceptional talent for climate-smart forestry through student-centric approaches and problem-based learning. The Forestry Department on the George campus is the custodian of this project and our Campus Principal for the George Campus, Dr Kaluke Mawila, was nominated as the first Chair of the Advisory Board.

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

4.1. Research outputs and NRF rating

Despite the various challenges academic staff have been navigating during the pandemic, the research output of Nelson Mandela University has been on an upward trajectory for the past four years. The National Research Foundation (NRF) is the largest national funder and annual progress reports were due for submission on 28 February 2022. A total of 65 progress reports were submitted to the NRF for the established researcher programmes. This year saw a pleasing increase in applications for NRF ratings with nine of the 20 applications new, while the rest were for re-evaluation. The rating system remains one of the key indicators of research stature in the South African national system of innovation.

4.2. Postgraduate and postdoctoral funding

Enhancing access and success for postgraduate students is primarily facilitated through funding for scholarships and research capacity development interventions. The University

has made bursaries to the amount of R116m available for deserving and qualifying postgraduate students in 2022.

Overall, 457 Honours, 391 Master's and 195 Doctoral scholarships were awarded by 25 February 2022 with funding from Council, the NRF and other external funders. There were also 71 postdoctoral fellows registered by this date. The total of 1043 awards comprise 85% Black (African, Coloured, Indian, and Asian) and 64% female students. The uptake of the awards is ongoing with 323 (31%) of scholarships taken up. Of these, 79% are Black and 67% are women.

4.3. Academic staff and postgraduate support

Through the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Office of Research Development runs a series of research capacity development workshops for Nelson Mandela University staff, postdoctoral fellows, and registered postgraduate students. Research capacity development and support interventions are being designed and implemented in collaboration with faculties to monitor postgraduate student progress and provide targeted support when this is needed.

There are 91 virtual workshops planned for 2022, with a virtual postgraduate orientation programme scheduled for 16-18 March. Individual online consultations have continued, with 51 postgraduate students and researchers assisted in this manner as of 25 February. Training offered by the Unit for Statistical Consultation (USC) is ongoing and monthly three-day quantitative research workshops will be presented throughout the academic year. To date, 71 seats have been reserved for these workshops and applications continue to be received.

The University remains committed to transforming the equity profile of academic staff with doctoral degrees. There are 18 active Thuthuka grant holders of whom 78% are black and 56% are women. The Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP) currently funds seven academics, three of whom are women. The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) cohort consists of 15 Black academics, of whom nine are women. A highlight over the review period is that one academic has graduated with a doctorate and two more have submitted their doctoral theses for examination.

Targeted funding to support emerging academics is also offered through the DHET-funded UCDG, which has been awarded for the new 2021-2023 funding cycle. The 2022 call for applications was published on 31 January 2022 and a new cohort of grant recipients will be approved through the course of the 2022 academic year.

4.4. Library and Information Services (LIS)

Nelson Mandela University is building innovative and responsive library services aligned with our Vision 2030 intentions to reimagine library and information services (LIS) for the

future. Due to the accelerated call for access to information in digital formats, LIS spends 80% of its budget on electronic information resources. This shift in expenditure has propelled LIS to look at sustainable management of financial resources through partnerships and free Open Educational Resources (OER). During the period under review, more than 360 registered users across all campuses took part in LIS training sessions and 1106 first year students visited the library as part of the mask-to-mask campus library tours.

4.5. Internationalisation

Internationalisation is an important vehicle through which the University can deliver on its academic missions and transformation agenda. However, the pandemic has seen a massive decline in international student enrolments across the globe.

Despite the decline in student numbers that was precipitated by Covid-19 pandemic in the last two years, there were important lessons learned and various strategies identified that will counter some of the losses and galvanise the improvement of international student enrolment figures for the University. A process of setting realistic international student enrolment targets that will allow the University to assess the successes of the plans in place, is currently underway.

There are several student recruitment strategies that will be implemented as early as the second quarter of 2022. Chief amongst these, is the Vice-Chancellor initiated project to expand the footprint of the University in the African continent. This will serve to contribute to identified internationalisation goals, including the advancement of research and recruitment of students from those previously uncharted parts of the continent, while also revitalising our relationships with countries and regions where we have traditionally drawn the bulk of our students. This will also serve to encourage intra-Africa student and staff mobility initiatives that are key for the international exposure of our postgraduate students and emerging researchers.

A programme for reviving the Semester Study Abroad and short learning programmes as important sources of University's third-stream revenue base is currently being developed for implementation in the second quarter of 2022. This is being supported by vigorous international marketing, university profiling and visibility initiatives being implemented in collaboration with the Communication and Marketing division, and the Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement Office, amongst other internal stakeholders involved in this initiative.

5. TRANSFORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE THAT PROMOTES DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

The Engagement and Transformation Portfolio (ETP) has nearly completed the development of its five-year strategic plan aligned with Vision 2030. This plan is an invitation for continuous critical reflection and unburdened conversations to make collective sense of

what a dynamic African university in the service of society might look like, and how it can be advanced through the work of this portfolio.

Cascading the *Statement of Commitment to an Inclusive Institutional Culture* is an essential enabler for realising Vision 2030 and falls within the purview of the Transformation Office. A task team has been convened to further this, and the matter will be tabled at the upcoming meeting of the Institutional Culture Working Group to broaden consultations relating to this project. The Transformation Office has also been involved in the first-year online student orientation programme to sensitise students to their role in promoting equality and social inclusion. Planned equality training, information sessions and activations started on 24 February, both virtually and physically, in residences.

Emthonjeni Student Wellness (ESW) and the Transformation Office continue with GBV awareness-raising activities, including the Singamadoda Questioning Masculinities campaign. Individual and group counselling support for GBV-related matters is provided on an ongoing basis. Ten peer helpers were trained in February and will attend to GBV matters experienced by their peers under the supervision of professional staff.

5.1. Engagement Colloquium and Transformation Indaba

The ETP started the academic year with a two-day *Celebrating and Re-Imagining Engagement Colloquium* on 7 and 8 February, which included the launch of the Engagement Forum to share and co-create ideas in partnership with our stakeholder communities. On 9 and 10 February 2022, the ETP convened the first Transformation Indaba to review performance against the current Institutional Transformation Plan (ITP) 2018-2022 and to initiate the development of the next five-year ITP in alignment with Vision 2030.

5.2. Hubs of Convergence (HoC)

The Hubs of Convergence (HoC) will move as a project to the Engagement Office from 1 April 2022. This includes the appointment of HoC project manager, Dr Bruce Damons, as the Director of the Engagement Office from the same date. Key areas of focus for the HoC will continue to be individual and organisational wellness, food sovereignty, GBV, developing local economies, and support for community-based organisations. The Mandela University Food Systems Programme is solidifying its partnership with the Nelson Mandela Foundation and will focus on upscaled and coordinated interventions on food and food systems-related issues with stakeholder communities. In addition, the wellness hub will be piloting a community-based substance abuse programme with a national NPO. An additional thematic hub will be created to implement programmes to support the organisations involved in the after-school sector.

5.3. AmaJingqi project

The AmaJingqi project started in 2012 and a University delegation met Chief Dumalisile, the Amajingqi Traditional Council, and representatives from government departments on site in Mbhashe Local Municipality. The MoU is being finalised and presents an opportunity for transdisciplinary collaboration to promote sustainable rural development in the area.

5.4. Centre for the Advancement of of Non-Racialism and Democracy (Canrad)

A highlight of the first quarter was the launch of the Routledge Handbook of Critical Studies in Whiteness, edited by Shona Hunter and Christi van der Westhuizen, with five virtual book launches across five time zones.

5.5. Centre for Women and Gender Studies (CWGS)

The CWGS will hold the second Annual Postgraduate Workshop in the Eastern Cape Province as part of establishing an Eastern Cape Gender Intellectual Corridor. CWGS is working with the Faculty of Humanities to retrieve and host the archive of Dr Brigalia Bam, which will showcase the essence of the CWGS's academic project of digitisation of women's biographical histories.

5.6. Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies (TIMS) and the Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET)

As part of ongoing intellectual engagement with the University's renaming, the Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies (TIMS) held a panel discussion, entitled *Mandela Identity in the Context of University Transformation*, on 10 February. This dug deeper into what the Mandela name and identity mean within our context.

The final year of the NRF-funded research project on Critical University Studies is the signature event for the CriSHET Chair in 2022. The mapping of Higher Education Studies, Higher Education Transformation Studies and Critical University Studies has been completed and will be shared at a Winter School.

5.7. Centre for Youth Unemployment, Employability and Empowerment (CYUEE)

The CYUEE's focus is on two funded research projects: the NIHSS-funded Putting Skills to Work: Skills and the Informal Sector Project, which works towards a manuscript that pulls together theoretical lenses in skills and livelihoods work and the DHET TVET Colleges Research Programme, in which the CYUEE is one of eight partners.

5.8. Centre for Integrated Post-school Education and Training (CIPSET)

In 2022, CIPSET will continue its work in Community, Adult and Worker Education (CAWE) and Solidarity Economy Education (SEE), with a particular focus on capacity-building in collaboration with various international networks. A detailed concept note is being prepared on the solidarity economy. This proposal builds on CIPSET's role in community food systems, health, energy and engineering, and related projects. A crucial aspect of this proposal is CIPSET's contribution to advancing the University's footprint in communities of Nelson Mandela Bay.

6. ENHANCING STUDENT LIVING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

As we continue to learn to co-exist with the pandemic, the University has established a consultative team to foster a safe environment for 2022.

6.1. Student Governance and Development

The SRC was formally constituted after the second online SRC elections in November 2021. Relevant departments were invited to present their policies, processes, and procedures to the SRC in January and February as part of an SRC induction programme. A two-day capacity development programme was also developed for the SRC which included a manual on leadership.

6.2. Student Housing

A walkabout in all on-campus residences assessed and then ensured that the requisite measures are in place for health and safety compliance. In Gqeberha, 3 169 students have been admitted to on-campus residences, with 2 381 registered and 788 outstanding. On our George campus, this figure is 3 795 students admitted, of which 2 871 are registered and 924 are outstanding. In Gqeberha, there are 7 994 students admitted to accredited off-campus residences.

6.3. Student Wellness

Students have been requested to upload their vaccination certificate at registration to assess vaccination rates (coverage) of student community, while mobile vaccination opportunities have been made available at registration venues. Going forward, vaccination facilities have been decentralised from the hub at North Campus and will be available on all campuses daily.

Student demand for psychological services has significantly increased, and together with the complexity of need, has outpaced staff capacity. Using the hybrid approach of mask-to-mask and virtual counselling, a total of 148 students received individual counselling support in 252 sessions from 1 January to end February. ESW needs a visiting psychiatrist to assist

with more severe clinical cases, and a registered social worker to attend to students' socio-economic circumstances.

6.4. Student Entrepreneurship

In recognition of Mandela University's leading work in this field, Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) has asked the University to host its 2022 National Lekgotla. The university is setting up a team, in collaboration with EDHE, to organise the event from 18 to 22 July.

6.5. Universal Accessibility and Disability Services (UADS)

UADS held a mask-to-mask meet and greet session for 36 first year students with disabilities who have registered for 2022. UADS also provided two information sessions on First-Year Success orientation sessions and a pre-recorded orientation video on the University's YouTube channel.

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

7.1. Enrolment management

The Enrolment Management Committee has met weekly since 12 January 2022 to ensure an integrated approach to the enrolment process as registration opened on 11 January 2022. As part of the 2022 academic year readiness plan, substantive effort has been invested in automating the Student Access and Enrolment Value Chain through the application of tools such as the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and the University Mobile App.

The Department of Basic Education committed to provide embargoed Grade 12 results to our service provider Adapt IT on 16 January 2022, but this did not materialise. This, with other factors, placed significant pressure on the Access and Enrolment office to prepare final offers to applicants before the release of the matric results on 21 January 2022. The Contact Centre employed eight students to assist with telephone and email queries during peak times (January to March). To date, the Centre has received more than 28 000 calls and 5 400 emails.

7.2. Online services and digital platforms

Learning and teaching venues are being technology enabled to facilitate the streaming of lectures across multiple venues simultaneously. The base technology has been installed in 51 venues with a further investment in seven mobile Zoom-enabled video-conferencing units, including the upgrading of some seminar rooms for hybridity, as well as a studio designed for recording lectures and presentations. An additional R3 million was allocated

at the beginning of the year for repurposing spaces and designating these as high-end Smart Venues.

The Moodle learning management system was upgraded and upscaled in February 2022 to cater for increased usage. Data continues to be provided and the student device initiative, now in its fourth year, has seen over 11 000 devices issued to date. The project to connect off-campus residences to the University ICT grid for uncapped Wi-Fi is nearing completion whereby 74 accredited off-campus residences with more than 9100 beds will be connected. Additionally, the Eduroam Wi-Fi connectivity has been deployed successfully at the Dora Nginza and Livingstone hospitals.

7.3. Campus Management

The George Campus was cut off from the town of George in November 2021 due to floods, disrupting operations. The Garden Route District Municipality started road repairs on 17 January 2022 that, although planned for completion by the end of March, have been delayed.

Most of the ongoing infrastructure and maintenance work undertaken as part of the Missionvale Campus readiness plan have been completed. Furthermore, the installation of a photovoltaic renewal energy farm on Missionvale at a cost of about R5.3 million is progressing. It should be active later this year and initially provide 27% of the Campus' electricity needs.

The maintenance backlog on the Second Avenue and Bird Street campuses is being urgently and systematically addressed, with renovations on these two campuses due to be completed shortly.

7.4. Infrastructure and Energy Initiatives

Numerous infrastructure projects costing a total of R736.5 million are due for completion in 2022. These include three student residences on the North and South Campuses. Phase 1 (500 beds) was handed over for occupation in February, Phase 2 (300 beds) is due for completion in April, and Phase 3 (1000 beds) around October. Following the adoption of the renewable energy strategy, an investment proposal is currently under consideration that will see the installation of solar plants on each campus at a total cost R65 million with a potential saving of R583.2 million over the 25-year period.

7.5. Human Resources

The drive to improve the turnaround time of filling vacancies led to 43 appointments (22 academics and 21 PASS staff from) from 1 October 2021 to 31 January 2022. All appointments were from the underrepresented groups and contribute positively to the goal of attaining a diversified workforce. A total of 57 (24 Academic and 33 PASS) employees left between the same period. One senior management appointment was made

during the reporting period, namely Ms Nandipha Sishuba as the new Executive Director: Human Resources.

Our Human Resources division is developing protocols for approval by Management of a planned, managed, and safe return to campus. The Safe Campus Coordinating Team is ensuring that lecture venues and staff office spaces are COVID-19 compliant. This is coupled with enhancing mobile device-based booking and tracking systems to automate as many processes as possible.

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

8.1. Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement (SRMA)

As at the end of February 2022, the amount mobilised by the Nelson Mandela University Trust through the SRMA stood at R12 157 427. Most funding mobilised through the Trust is for bursaries, scholarships, and engagement projects. The bulk of this, R6 449 684, came from the public sector, while R4 202 080 was from trusts and foundations, and the remaining amount from corporates and individuals.

Over and above resources mobilised on behalf of the Trust, the SRMA has coordinated partnerships with strategic partners in support of the University's apex priorities. As an example, the One Oceans Economy Initiative led by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) has yielded the transfer of R4 181 791 to the University.

A more dedicated focus on international resource mobilisation is important hence a schedule to this effect, spearheaded by the VC, is being developed. Other key directions for 2022 include a coordinated approach to institutional resource mobilisation and continued support towards mobilising resources for the medical school.

8.2. Short-term financial planning

Council approved the 2022 budget and Annual Performance Plan at its last meeting of 2021. There will be continued pressure on the budget, so a reprioritisation process continues in 2022 for the virement of budgets to assist in addressing new and reprioritised needs due to COVID-19 and hybrid ways of work as we transition into an adjusted operating model. Savings on institutional overheads and earmarked accounts, if realised, will be transferred to the COVID-19 Contingency Fund on a quarterly basis.

Mandela University still needs to recoup more than R322 million (end December 2021) in outstanding student fees to ensure the institution's continued viability. Another key sustainability indicator is the salary benchmark set at 65%. A deviation of 1% was approved for three years to fund the roll out of mission-critical posts identified in the organisational redesign process. However, this needs to be reduced to 65% within three years.

The subsidy allocation letter from the Minister was embargoed until the budget speech. Although no communication had been received at the time of writing this report, the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework budget allocations and Appropriation Bill appear to be in line with the allocation letter. This would result in a 0.9% increase on 2021 block grant subsidy, marginally better than the budgeted 0% increase.

The annual enrolment of students is directly linked to the sustainability of the University since this determines government subsidies. In addition, government institutes penalties for under- or over-enrolment beyond a 2% variance. The subsidy for 2022 included penalties for under-enrolment in previous years.

The exclusion of an upfront payment by NSFAS in 2022 is concerning. The N+1 rule for NSFAS bursary students will be another area to monitor, which will escalate as we reach N+1 for the first cohort of NSFAS bursary students funded from 2018 after the implementation of the new NSFAS bursary scheme.

As at 9 March 2022, the University had received 9 206 applications for financial concessions for qualifying students up to and including the “missing middle” students, with 6 261 applications being approved. Temporary accommodation has been provided for senior or returning students yet to confirm funding. The Financial Aid Task Team meets weekly and escalates matters to the Dean of Students and ED Finance as needed.

The 2021 financial year statutory audit and grant audits are underway and planned at this stage according to normal reporting deadlines. BBBEE remains high on the agendas of MANCO and Council, and a separate report to Council will be tabled in this regard.

8.3. Long-term financial planning

A Sustainability and Institutional Viability Task Team (SIVTT) has been established by Management comprising various workgroups. SIVTT is geared towards ensuring that in the medium- to long-term, recurrent cost structures are financed from recurrent revenue streams excluding finance income. The work of the Strategy-Aligned Budgeting and Sustainable Resource Stewardship Working Group of SIVTT will inform the 2023 Budget Directives and Annual Performance Plan. As in 2021, careful stewardship will need to be applied when considering recurrent projects or programmes given levels of resource constraints in the sector.

9. CONCLUSION

In 2021, our focus and energies were invested on keeping students and staff safe in the face of the ongoing global pandemic, while simultaneously cascading our Vision 2030 strategy. In 2022, these priorities remain paramount. There can be no doubt that Nelson Mandela University is well on its way to carving out a niche internationally, continentally, and nationally, as an institution that has embraced its comprehensive identity in an innovative

manner that reflects and demonstrates its commitment to social embeddedness. The current higher education landscape with its varied challenges suggests that there is no “one-size-fits-all” response. At a time when individual higher education institutions and the sector are under sustained fiscal pressure and confronted with ever-increasing complexity, we would like to thank Council for their judicious steering of the University, as we chart a sustainable path towards the future.