



**Vice-Chancellor's Quarterly Report to Council  
Quarter 3, 2021**

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# VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT TO COUNCIL THIRD QUARTER, 2021

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

As South Africa reaches the 18<sup>th</sup> month mark since the advent of the coronavirus pandemic in March last year, Nelson Mandela University remains seized with ongoing efforts to enhance student access for success, while also making transformative gains in contributing to socially just, and sustainable futures. Despite the turbulence and uncertainty of our prevailing context, we remain resolute in steering a considered course towards the execution of our Vision 2030 strategy and this quarterly report will provide Council with an overview of strategic highlights and challenges in relation to our transformation imperatives.

## **2. VISION 2030 STRATEGIC TRAJECTORIES**

We have begun the process of cascading our Vision 2030 strategy into all executive management portfolios and faculties to ensure that we collectively embrace the distinctive strategic trajectories and scholarly endeavours that will set us apart as a university in the service of society.

### **2.1 Medical School**

Since the initial cohort of first-year students started the medical programme in March, there has been ongoing and far-reaching interest in the programme. By the time applications closed at the end of June for the 2022 intake of 80 students, the University had received more than 4 000 applications.

Most of the posts envisaged as part of the third wave of appointments required for the Medical School have been filled, amounting to a total of 21 staff. Of these employees, 72 percent are from designated groups and we will continue with targeted recruitment initiatives that contribute to enhancing demographic representivity.

Security upgrades are complete and further funding will be invested as part of the University's safety and security implementation plan, as well as addressing water and electricity supply challenges, all of which will also benefit the surrounding community.

### **2.2 Ocean Sciences**

The Institute for Coastal and Marine Research (CMR) has built strong links with the French Embassy and is currently hosting a research and project manager with expertise in international project design. His focus is on establishing collaborations with key French, European Union and regional institutions in the South Western Indian Ocean to conduct transdisciplinary ocean sciences research. Under the leadership of our Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Innovation and Internationalisation, the University hosted a delegation from the French Embassy on 15 September to strengthen these ties and we are confident that this will catalyse the implementation of key dimensions of our Ocean Sciences strategy.

The advisory board of the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI) held a strategic session in August to assess the Institute's sustainability strategy and proposed revenue generation streams beyond 2024. As part of this strategy, SAIMI will strive to augment its partnership model to include local and international maritime industries, academic institutions and relevant government authorities for the purposes of expanding its contribution to the ocean economy through sought after research, skills development and advocacy programmes.

### **2.3 Revitalising the Humanities**

Efforts to revitalise the humanities continue, with the Faculty of Humanities and the Engagement and Transformation Portfolio spearheading the drive to provide a stimulating intellectual culture through a wide range of topical webinars and discussions. As an example, the Transdisciplinary Institute of Mandela Studies hosted a workshop in August focusing on the politics and cultures of naming.

Alongside the focus on indigenous African knowledges and interrogating Western hegemonies, further exciting new areas of study and research are emerging in the Faculty of Humanities, such as digital humanities and animation. We are also excited to inform Council that the Mandela University Press has been ratified by executive management and is being established with support from African Sun Media.

*CriSHET* collaborates with the Centre for Philosophy in Africa, the Faculty of Humanities, and the Emengini Institute for Comparative Global Studies in the United States on the Africa and Knowledge Seminar Series. On 19 August, it hosted a seminar by Prof Antjie Krog on ways of reading South African novels.

The Centre for Women and Gender Studies spearheaded the celebration of 150 years of Charlotte Maxeke's life in collaboration with the Chair in African Feminist Imaginations, the Charlotte Maxeke Institute, and the Charlotte Maxeke Residence. The CWGS hosted a month-long national webinar series in August which attracted notable women from across the continent and the Chair also launched her book *Female Fear Factory*.

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

### **3.1 Student Development and Support**

The LT Collab provides numerous learning development and support activities and all Supplemental Instruction (SI) support is continuing online over the pandemic, with SI Leaders trained and able to offer online support to students. The platforms used serve to foster a feeling of connectedness and belonging among students. The demographic profile of SI leaders is 83 percent Black (A, C, I) and 51 percent female. Furthermore, more tutors have been enabled to conduct tutorials bi- or multilingually. Among the multilingual strategies shared with tutors and academics is code meshing with an online learning focus,

which improves students' academic literacies. A further source of academic support is Student Success Coaching (SSC), which focuses on reaching out particularly to students from quintile 1, 2, and 3 schools, to support their transition into the university environment by enhancing their academic strategies and skills.

### **3.2 Staff Empowerment and Capacity Development**

The past quarter has seen the appointment of e-technologists and learning experience designers in the LT Collab. This has enabled the LT Collab to offer technological and learning design support to staff. Demonstrations and workshops on apps and available software have optimised online learning. The Learning Design team is leading a process to standardise the structure of online course content and learner experience across programmes with all online resources being redesigned to reflect our "Africa-purposed" learning and teaching vision.

### **3.3 Learning and Teaching Challenges**

It has taken innovation and dedication to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning activities in the face of restrictions imposed by the pandemic during varying levels of lockdown. Among these, a trend experienced across South African universities is an increase in academic dishonesty with the shift to online assessments. We are addressing this through varied assessment activities, reducing the time during which the online assessment can be undertaken, and through procuring the Invigilator app, a monitoring tool. In addition, the Deanery is exploring ways to cultivate a culture of integrity.

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

The Office of the DVC: RII and associated portfolios have made significant contributions to the University's strategic and transformation priorities over this reporting period. Online workshops, conferences, training and webinars are platforms for building knowledge as finding alternate methods has become the new norm.

### **4.1 Sustainability Sciences Hub**

The National Research Foundation (NRF) has appointed DVC: RII, Dr Thandi Mgwebi, to lead a proposal for the NRF to host the Global Secretariat Hub for Africa. This comes at a pivotal point in the consolidation of our work on Sustainability Science which will further position the University as a champion in this field, with a uniquely African focus. The concept has been further catalysed by the University's recent recognition in the 2021 THE Impact Ranking results, and our ongoing relationship with Global Future Earth whose mission it is to accelerate the transformation to global sustainability through research and innovation.

## **4.2 Postgraduate Support and Funding**

Overall, 348 honours, 727 master's and 356 doctoral scholarships were awarded as of 27 August 2021 with funding from Council, the NRF and other external funders. This represented 1 431 awards comprising 80 percent Black (A, C, I) and 59 percent female students. In line with the University's transformation agenda, it is important to increase the proportion of women who take up postdoctoral training opportunities. The projected investment in postdoctoral and research fellowships for the 2021 academic year is R9.2-million.

The 2021 research development workshop schedule offers more than 78 training, support and development opportunities for postgraduate students, postdoctoral fellows and academics. The Unit for Statistical Consultation (USC) offers ongoing training and a Moodle site with course material, pre-recorded lectures and self-assessment tools has been created for students and researchers in addition to facilitated online sessions.

## **4.3 Transformation in Research Leadership**

Transformation within the flagship programmes of Research Chairs, entities and NRF rated researchers has an impact on research leadership. Mandela University hosts 16 research chairs, and three of the most recently appointed chairs have all been Black, with two contributing to the revitalisation of the humanities, and the third, linked to the Medical School. Future endeavours will focus on growing the pool of research chairs with an emphasis on those who are funded externally or by industry.

## **4.4 Internationalisation and Transformation of Higher Education**

The expansion of the global footprint of the University specifically prioritises forging and strengthening South-South linkages and expanding our African footprint. The Baltic and Nordic countries have also been identified as strategic partners, along with the Caribbean islands and South America. The International Office (IO) is reviewing existing membership of international networks and associations to ensure that there is expanded scope to influence research agendas supporting the institutional research themes.

The proposed new organisational design for the International Office was approved by MANCO in July and will serve at Council for approval. It is envisaged that the new model will shift mindsets from viewing internationalisation predominantly through a commercial lens to embrace it as a catalyst for transformation.

## **4.5 Library and Information Services (LIS)**

We have commenced with gradually opening the campus libraries given the need to provide conducive learning spaces for students. Aligning with our Vision 2030 transformation intentions requires that LIS acquire more eBooks and digital platforms to enhance access to online resources. Robust negotiation with publishers is ongoing as the

demand for access to electronic prescribed and core titles continues to increase. To this end, LIS has signed two new SANLiC Read and Publish agreements to promote Open Access and purchased LibGuides in August, a content management and information sharing system which allows for easy navigation. Our Inter Library Loan (ILL) section has furthermore been accepted into the Online Computer Library Centre's (OCLC) Express digital network which will ensure that users benefit from speedy delivery of information resources from thousands of libraries around the world.

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

### **5.1 Student Governance and Development**

Our flagship student leadership development programmes such as Beyond the Classroom (BtC), Leaders for Change (LFC) and Ebuhlanti Men's leadership programme continue to be offered through virtual platforms. The fourth Nelson Mandela Annual Youth Convention took place on 27 and 28 September with the keynote address delivered by Advocate Thembeke Ngcukaitobi focusing on the topic "Rethinking structural inequality in South Africa: Towards youth development and social justice". As part of a drive to create platforms for reflective practice and experimentation, we have adapted the concept of social laboratories through piloting "youth labs" focusing on the themes of education, human potential, and youth entrepreneurship.

### **5.2 Student Entrepreneurship**

Fifteen female student entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to assess their growth as part of a pilot programme by Chaya Legal, in partnership with the Madibaz Entrepreneurship Hub. The She Journeys Programme will comprise a weekly live online session that will seek to equip participants to achieve success in their businesses by recognising the value in their unique identities and life stories.

Mandela University students won three of the four categories in the regional round of the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Intervarsity and will compete in the national finals in November. These winners are Deborah Balogun (New Ideas category), Randolph Meth (Existing Business: Tech category), and Siyathemba Mbhele (Existing Business: General category).

### **5.3 Student Residences**

The Department of Student Housing focuses on providing an environment conducive to living, learning and intellectual engagement for our students living in residences in Gqeberha and George. Despite the restrictions on student mobility during the various levels of lockdown, residences have continued to be the preferred spaces for student living and learning. Our on-campus residences are occupied by about 3 324 students out of a total capacity of 3 609 beds (92% occupancy rate), while our accredited, off-campus residences house about 10 386 students out of 13 842 beds (75% occupancy rate).



In many instances, residence rooms have become classrooms for students, and this has weighed heavily on the mental health of some. In response, University residence management has appointed students as Wellness Champions to assist residence managers in monitoring adherence to COVID-19 protocols. With the water crisis reaching a critical stage in the Metro, the University has also appointed Water Champions to encourage students in residences to embrace water-saving initiatives.

#### **5.4 Student Health Services**

Student Health Services has been instrumental in our COVID-19 vaccination rollout and, as at the end of August, about 1 051 students had been vaccinated. A drastic decline in the number of vaccinations being administered has prompted the University to engage students, staff and the public on vaccine hesitation. Of concern is the 18 to 34 cohort, whose initial eagerness seems to have dwindled. The University will be prioritising continued campaigns to encourage students to be vaccinated as part of the nationwide drive to achieve population immunity.

#### **5.5 Universal Accessibility and Disability Services (UADS)**

UADS has developed a platform, "UADS Speaks Out", to encourage students living with disabilities to share their experiences to facilitate a better understanding of their needs. The Unit has digitalised certain services to ensure that students with disabilities are able to register online to book assistive devices and other forms of support. In collaboration with the Faculty of Humanities, UADS is developing a short learning programme (SLP) on South African sign language and is conducting research on augmentative and alternative communication.

#### **5.6 George Campus**

At our George Campus, Student Life and Development (SLD) and the Agriculture Student Society have forged an all-encompassing partnership with the local Department of Correctional Services (DCS) to promote food security, provide service learning opportunities for students, and facilitate the training of inmates in basic agricultural skills. The DCS has allocated land for this project while the University will share capabilities such as leadership and artisanal skills development.

#### **5.7 Madibaz Sport**

The University continues to create opportunities for students and staff to participate in sport at the highest levels and there have been notable achievements. The University was represented by five athletes and coaches at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in July and was last represented at this level in 2008. Madibaz water polo coach Delaine Mentoor recently received national recognition when named Coach of the Year at the Momentum GSport Awards. The squad was the first SA women's water polo team to compete in the Olympic Games and were also named team of the year at this prestigious event.

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

### **6.1 Repositioning Transformative Engagement**

The University's Food Systems Working Group (NMUFS) is focusing on continued stakeholder engagement and the development of signature projects. Currently, this working group coordinates 28 different projects and programmes across four thematic areas. The possibility of a Chair in Food Systems is also being explored.

The Community Convergence Workstream (CCW), coordinated by the Hubs of Convergence (HoC) and CIPSET, continues to engage extensively in the area of food sovereignty. Through the Abamelwane project it supports community stakeholders in establishing seedbanks, harvesting produce, and organising area assemblies. A new initiative is being co-created between the Abamelwane and Northern Lights School to support an agricultural programme. CIPSET is offering its solidarity economy education (SEE) programme to a group of TVET College graduates and an SLP is being implemented to support TVET students to establish a youth cooperative related to food production.

The CCW continues to work with Ikhala Trust, which held its first Asset-Based Community Development session with six Community Kitchens in Nelson Mandela Bay this quarter. A digital tool is being created for Eastern Cape NGOs to share and report critical issues and developmental challenges, and the proposal for a citizen journalism project with Ubuso Bethu has been accepted.

Other notable developments include a website developed by the HIV & AIDS Unit with 66 templates to support ECD practitioners and NGOs through community-based HIV prevention programmes. The HoC is reworking an SLP on community-based research with a focus on convergence co-constructed with four other South African universities.

The Faculty of Education has several engagement projects underway, including the Book Bag Project, ongoing collaborative interventions in Cala, and the Unilever-DBE Grade R Project. In conjunction with USAf, the Faculty is also running a Women in Leadership SLP with 26 participants across the country, including three from Mandela University.

We are proud to be associated with The Herald Nelson Mandela University Citizens of the Year, a long-standing community-spirited project in the Metro. We congratulate the ten category winners of the 2021 competition, particularly Mr Derrick Hoshe and Professor Zukiswa Zingela who are members of staff and won the award in the sports and health categories respectively.

The University's increasing investment in engagement is evident in the twelve applications received for the University's prestigious Engagement Excellence Awards. Seven awards were made for work in 2020 under pandemic conditions. Applications for Engagement

Advancement Funding were received, and funding was granted to support five (5) projects across multiple faculties.

## **6.2 Partnerships**

In July, the University signed a memorandum of understanding with the Automotive Industry Development Centre (AIDC-EC) towards the provision of relevant industry-aligned degree programmes and other capacity building initiatives aimed at bolstering the automotive manufacturing sector and provincial economy. The MOU signing follows a series of discussions with AIDC-EC to explore collaborative opportunities such as: reviving the research Chair for Automotive Engineering; enhancing the Uyilo e-mobility and ENTSA programme activities; and partnering on Industry 4.0 activities as it relates to the manufacturing and automotive industry.

In May, the Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement (SRMA) office successfully bid for a five-year partnership with the National School of Government to be anchored in the Raymond Mhlaba Centre for Leadership and Governance, and the Engagement and Transformation portfolio. In addition, the Leadership Academy in the Business School is implementing a programme to support the capacitation of the Local Economic Development officials in Eastern Cape municipalities, as well as a New Venture Creation programme to train 1 000 unemployed learners through the RAP/MERSETA Programme.

## **6.3 Social Justice**

On 25 August, the DVC: ETP, CANRAD and CrSHET co-hosted *"The 20th Anniversary of the UN World Conference Against Racism: Challenges and Advances in the Global Fight Against Racism"*. Distinguished speakers included our Chair of Council and Chancellor, former Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission, Professor Barney Pitso, and the University of Alberta Chair in Feminism and Intersectionality, Prof Shirley Anne Tate.

The Transformation Office continues to advocate for equality and social inclusion (ESPI) through the development and distribution of material aligned with the new Policy for the Promotion of Equality and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination. Online ESPI and Mandela Pride sessions are ongoing and cover topics such as xenophobia and refugee rights, positive masculinity, workplace mental health, disability disclosure, and sexual health.

This quarter, interventions have also included policy training with frontline staff on sexual harassment and sexual offences, and monthly staff onboarding presentations on GBV. New initiatives include GBV support groups for male and LGBTI survivors.

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

### **7.1 Strategic Enrolment Management**

An Enrolment Management Committee (EMC) has been established by MANCO to implement transversal interventions to promote integrated and streamlined enrolment management processes at Mandela University. The EMC is jointly convened by the DVC: ETP, DVC: LT and the Registrar and comprises five (5) transversal workstreams.

As at 30 August 2021, our enrolment statistics for 2022 are showing positive signs of significant increases in the number of applications and acceptances of offers. As at 1 September 2021, more applications had been received compared to the same time last year, (58 818 compared to 50 433) and this may still rise as undergraduate applications close on 30 September. While this trend is encouraging, we know from experience that it is crucial to sustain personalised engagement with accepted students until they register at the University, since this is an important precondition for the University's long-term financial sustainability. The aim is to complete the 2021 academic year by December 2021, to limit any overlap with the 2022 academic year.

### **7.2 Risk Management**

Risk monitoring continues, with risk registers updated every quarter. The increased use of technology during the pandemic has called for a more vigilant digital security system. Various strategies address this, including an awareness campaign on cyber security due to the high number of staff now working remotely. To enhance ethical governance, key policies on fraud and whistle blowing have been developed to embed a culture of transparency and accountability. Implementation plans and awareness campaigns will be rolled out once these policies have been approved by Council.

### **7.3 Staff Appointments**

From January to end July 2021, 95 staff members were appointed, constituted by 37 Academics and 58 PASS staff, all from underrepresented groups. These appointments contribute to transforming the University staff complement into a diversified workforce. The focus for the next quarter is to fill 45 vacancies.

Senior management vacancies filled from January to August 2021 include: Prof Zukiswa Zingela (Executive Dean: Health Sciences), Prof Pamela Maseko (Executive Dean: Humanities), Dr Phumeza Kota-Nyati (Dean: Learning and Teaching), Mr Lutho Ndivane (Senior Director: Support Services), Ms Sharon Masiza (Senior Director: Missionvale, Second Avenue and Bird Street Campuses) and Mr Melvin Syce (Senior Director: Infrastructure Services and Space Optimisation).

## **7.4 Employment Equity and Staff Demographic Profile**

We continue to face challenges of a small pool of candidates in scarce skills disciplines. Affected faculties have a growing group of early career academics (ECAs) who need to be nurtured and developed to become the next generation of academic leaders. In transforming the equity profile of academic staff with doctoral degrees, the University has leveraged national initiatives from the NRF and DHET to ensure they receive the support and training needed to attain higher degrees. There are 18 active Thuthuka grant holders, of whom 78 percent are Black and 56 percent 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 at Mandela University comprises 14 Black academics, of whom nine are women. Targeted funding to support emerging academics is also offered through the DHET-funded University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) which has been awarded for the new 2021-2023 funding cycle. Of the 23 grant recipients, 15 are Black and 12 are women. These initiatives are critical as significant numbers of senior academic staff members will retire within the next five years.

Several remuneration and benefits initiatives intended to ensure Mandela's salary levels remain competitive are underway. These include the harmonisation of salary packages, crafting a framework to identify scarce and critical skills, and adopting a Total Guaranteed Package approach. The Building Workplace Relationship workshops facilitated by the CCMA have had a positive impact in addressing sub-optimal relationships between management and trade unions.

An HR customer relationship management system went live on 27 August, aimed at improving HR systems and turnaround times. The Human Resources (HR) Directorate is also partnering with the Faculty of Science to pilot Talent Genie, the new e-recruitment system.

## **7.5 Response to COVID-19 and Vaccination Programme**

Newly appointed Faculty of Health Sciences Executive Dean Prof Zingiswa Zingela joins Prof Darelle van Greunen in the Premier's Extended Advisory panel on COVID-19 which sits every second Sunday of the month and is also part of the psychosocial stream of the Premier's Advisory Panel.

Internally, a multi-stakeholder University Coronavirus Task Team meets each week to develop mitigation and compliance measures. The North Campus-based Department of Health-accredited Vaccination Centre which opened in June to serve staff, students, and members of the public has proved to be extremely popular and is perceived as highly professional. Technology platforms provide ease of access to processes and analytics that guide decision-making on COVID-19 compliance.

By the end of August, the vaccination roll-out programme and campaign had resulted in the administration of 8 870 vaccinations, of which 1 631 were University staff. This is gratifying as it means our target to get most staff members vaccinated will soon be reached.

## **7.6 Staff Wellness**

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the health and wellness of staff and students. Accordingly, the Coronavirus Task Team has supported interventions spearheaded by Emthonjeni (for students) and Wellness@Work (for staff). These include webinars with professional wellness practitioners, on-site counselling services and grief support sessions to assist employees adapt to new and remote working norms, and to cope with the loss of colleagues, friends and family members.

## **7.7 ICT Automation and Digitalisation**

A combination of wise investments in prior years and a shift of focus by the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) division has enabled the University to respond to pandemic-related challenges with agility. As a result, we have seen expanded and extensive use of online learning management systems and tools, the use of digital platforms for collaboration such as MS Teams and Zoom, and virtual work continuing seamlessly. Various technology-enabled safety and security projects are underway to expand our surveillance camera footprint and to revamp control rooms across all campuses.

## **7.8 Communication and Marketing**

Various communication and marketing campaigns are underway to address specific challenges identified by the Coronavirus Task Team. The dedicated University COVID-19 website is regularly updated and new material added, such as the VAX FAX campaign to counter disinformation about vaccinations. A media campaign comprising a series of opinion editorials by academics and experts has been supporting these campaigns.

As an important dimension of our transformation, Phase 2 of the Naming and Renaming process was recently concluded after an extensive stakeholder consultation process. This phase focused on renaming 17 faculty buildings and 26 student facilities and residences on the George Campus. The proposed names have been recommended to Council for deliberation and approval.

## **7.9 Infrastructure and Operations**

The Faculty of Law opened a new building on South Campus, the design of which symbolises a commitment to the Constitution of South Africa and social justice. It will be used as office space to welcome visiting academics and judges and to engage with students.

Efforts are underway for an overhauled catering service that delivers better quality and affordable meals to the University community. Working in collaboration with the Dietetics Department, the comprehensive solution will source food from, and empower, new suppliers using an integrated ICT system.

### **7.10 Sustainability Initiatives and Response to Water Crisis**

In pursuit of the goal to transform Mandela University into an energy and water secure institution, innovative solutions have been introduced in new buildings such as the student residences in George and Gqeberha. All new buildings incorporate environmentally friendly elements such as low-energy rated appliances, efficient water heating and storage, and other “green” equipment and fittings.

A three-pronged water emergency management strategy was implemented in June to respond to the progressive reduction of water supply in the Metro. This strategy includes using technology, source diversification and user adaptation solutions, and is intended not only to mitigate negative impacts of the current drought, but also to advance the ongoing drive to promote environmental sustainability.

A multi-stakeholder team is driving a water crisis management campaign, #SaveWater. This is aimed at reducing per capita water consumption on campus, developing strategies to access alternative water sources, and implementing medium- to long-term sustainability and water security interventions. A technical water crisis working group is working closely with the NMB Business Chamber and the Municipality in driving projects to help reduce per capita daily consumption in the Metro.

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

There are many levels of uncertainty as the University grapples with short-term financial solutions, but we need keep our eye on the longer-term economic outlook. There is pressure on universities around the globe and nationally we have already witnessed material cuts which may impact negatively on our strategic and transformation intentions.

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

The Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement (SRMA) Office contributes to resource sustainability and student access by enabling fundraising and resource mobilisation for bursaries, engagement and advancing the University through alumni relations. Funding is mobilised through the Nelson Mandela University Trust and the impact of the pandemic and associated economic downturn has undoubtedly been a serious concern. However, Trustees adopted a mitigation strategy in late 2020 with the positive result of funds paid and committed so far in 2021 reaching R97 006 680, against a target of R85-million.

It is pleasing to note that donations from corporates have also increased in line with attempts to diversify our funder base. Overall, since 2014, Trust income has increased and operating costs have declined. These bursaries complement the expanded NSFAS scheme and, to date, 1 230 students have benefitted, of which the overwhelming majority are Black, as defined in the B-BBEE codes, with a 50/50 gender split.

The Mandela University Convergence Fund raised R1 122 927 in 2020, of which R1 063 296 has been used to benefit local communities. In July, MANCO approved amended terms of reference for the fund to align it with Vision 2030 and position it to mobilise resources for engagement and the Hubs of Convergence nationally and internationally.

In terms of advancement, the Alumni Relations Office has invested in an online networking platform (Graduway) and a public domain alumni information resource (LiveAlumni) late in 2020. It started developing a strong online Mandela Alumni Connect network using this platform in 2021. The Alumni Association's self-sustaining University Shop added an online retail outlet where, from the end of September, University-branded items will be available.

## **8.2 Short-Term Financial Outlook**

Pressure continues on the Council-approved R10-million Contingency Fund for COVID-19 related costs, and a budget reprioritisation process is ongoing for the virement of budgets to assist in addressing new and reprioritised needs due to the pandemic. Any savings on institutional overheads and earmarked accounts are transferred to this fund every quarter.

The University has allocated or administered bursaries and merit awards to 3 972 students. The N+1 rule for NSFAS bursary students is an area to monitor, especially as the first cohort of such students impacted by this rule are due to complete their studies in 2021. Up to 1 316 students may be affected. Declining postgraduate enrolments will have an impact on future subsidy generation. To mitigate this, the out-of-budget allocation of R10-million approved towards the funding of Masters' and doctoral students in 2021 will be reprioritised within the University's operational budget baseline in 2022.

As at the end July 2021, we forecasted an operating deficit of R8-million, with R25.1-million surplus after forecasted investment income. Among other factors, this assumes no further salary adjustments. This is a welcome improvement from the second quarter report which forecast an operating deficit of R20.6 million, with R10.8 million surplus. We note a recent University Ombud arbitration outcome on a dispute resolution process relating to salary increases implemented for 2021. The HRREM of Council will elaborate on this matter during the course of the Council meeting.

BBBEE remains high on the MANCO and Council agenda and the University is preparing for verification based on the 2020 financial year. A separate report on BBBEE will be tabled at Council.



### **8.3 Long-Term Financial Planning**

A Sustainability and Institutional Viability Task Team (SIVTT) has been established to plan, coordinate, oversee and report on the various work streams to promote long-term sustainability, as mandated by Council. As is the case annually, the 2022 budget directives as approved by MANCO and FFC, will inform our strategic approach to financial planning and constructing the 2022 budget.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is not the least of the factors affecting the ongoing financial sustainability of Nelson Mandela University, but it is certainly one that adds a substantial element of unpredictability. It remains imperative to develop, and maintain, appropriate strategic and operational responses to ensure stability.

### **9. CONCLUSION**

It is increasingly clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, placing immense pressure not only on our students and staff, but also on the communities we serve. As a university in the service of society, we cannot ignore the devastation visited on those who are most vulnerable and least equipped to survive the impact of the pandemic. This makes our Vision 2030 transformative intentions even more pressing as we strive to contribute to the co-creation of a more socially equitable and sustainable future for all. We continue to be inspired by the creativity, agility and grit shown by our staff and students under very trying circumstances and we would also like to express our gratitude to Council for their guidance and unwavering support as we collectively transition towards the final quarter of 2021.