NELSON MANDELA

UNIVERSITY

Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council
Quarter 3

26 September 2024

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1. Introduction

This report will provide Council with a narrative overview of strategic highlights and challenges for the period under review through the lens of transformation as the reporting theme for quarter three. Through our distinctive niche as a socially embedded university, Nelson Mandela University is expanding and consolidating the gains made in the service of society. The University remains stable, with ethical governance and leadership, despite multiple challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, climate change, hunger, energy and water insecurity, and high crime rates.

2. Vision 2030 and Strategic Trajectories

Transformation is a complex, multi-faceted and integrated process of continuous institutional renewal in alignment with our vision, mission, and values. Nelson Mandela University's Vision 2030 seeks to advance social justice, equality, and inclusion by providing life-changing educational experiences that liberate human potential in pursuit of a better life for all. This is reflected in the University's strategic trajectories, which seek to differentiate the University nationally and globally.

2.1 Ocean Sciences

Nelson Mandela University is leading a collaboration with eight other South African universities to develop the South African Masters in Ocean Science (SAMOS) programme. This project has received European Union funding of €800K over 36 months for curriculum development and this will be a welcome addition to our existing suite of postgraduate ocean sciences offerings. The Institute for Coastal and Marine Research (CMR) is actively recruiting postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows to take advantage of an exchange programme funded by the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture in Germany.

Under the leadership of the interim head of Ocean Sciences, excellent progress is being made with institutionalising this important strategic trajectory. This includes the establishment of a transversal, multi-stakeholder Ocean Sciences Stakeholder Forum with the mandate of fostering inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration to position Mandela University as the destination of choice in addressing the vexing challenges confronting our oceans.

2.2 Medical School

The Medical School, now in its fourth year of student intake, is growing and progression to the fifth and sixth year is expected to proceed successfully, with the first cohort of Mandela doctors set to complete at the end of 2026. Ongoing curriculum transformation and renewal processes ensure that local realities are embedded in the content and delivery of the medical programme.

The admissions criteria to the MBChB programme have been refined to improve access and opportunities for a diverse student body. This has been matched with a deliberate drive to diversify staff demographics. The Medical School welcomed its first two academic clinical heads of department in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Paediatrics and Child Health on 1 July 2024. Further appointments of other Head of Departments are essential for curriculum delivery in the clinical years (years 4-6).

2.3 Revitalising the Humanities

The Faculty of Humanities has launched the first Digital Humanities hub in the country. This hub aims to contribute to the revitalisation and Africanisation of the humanities by creating transdisciplinary, collaborative digital spaces. Such spaces will facilitate critical and diverse digital humanities-related activities and engagements, including monthly workshops.

In another boost for the humanities, the faculty has drafted a proposal for a Creative Media Agency Development Hub to assist its creative arts students in developing entrepreneurial skills. The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) has pledged a sum of R 1 156 800 to establish a studio space.

Reflections on the revitalisation of the humanities featured at the Research Week (9-13 September). The session affirmed the productive growth of this area of work over the past five years.

2.4 Transdisciplinary Sustainability Sciences

Since its launch in March 2024, the University Science Centre has worked to establish itself as a cornerstone of transdisciplinary science education, community engagement, and transformation. With 2 508 visitors in its first four months of operation, the Centre has attracted diverse audiences and catered to multiple stakeholders across the University and beyond by hosting numerous events and exhibitions.

The Nelson Mandela University Research Week took place from 9-13 September with the theme *"Advancing the International Decade of Science for Sustainable Development"*. This event focused on the evolving role of research in shaping South Africa's future by responding to grand societal challenges, including climate change, food security and health disparities. To this end, Mandela University's research agenda and themes are aligned with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while also addressing the unique challenges faced by the African continent in pursuit of Africa Agenda 2063.

3. Distinctive educational purpose and philosophy that contributes to student access for success

3.1 Student Access and Success

An enhanced online application system was developed and implemented for the 2025 intake. In addition, the University has adopted a new method to admit first-time applicants, which has transitioned from a "first-come-first-served" approach to a ranking system based on the Applicant Score (AS).

The Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) review is underway to promote long-term sustainability by co-creating a contextually responsive and relevant academic programme mix. This comprehensive review will be undertaken across all faculties in 2025 to assess the strategic and resource viability of all taught programmes, at under- and postgraduate levels.

Due to the recent power outages experienced in Summerstrand and other parts of Gqeberha, which led to the suspension of academic activities from 28 to 30 August 2024, the Executive Committee of Senate (ECS), on behalf of the Senate, approved that the end-of-year final assessments be postponed by a week to 11–30 November 2024. This adjustment will provide additional days to compensate for the impact of the power outages on learning and teaching.

3.2 Learning Development (LD)

The student performance tracking system, RADAR, initially piloted in the Faculty of Law, is being rolled out to all faculties with the promise of availing predictive analytics on student performance. It is concerning that the University is experiencing an increase in disciplinary cases relating to academic integrity, including plagiarism, through the abuse of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). To this end, an institutional position statement has been approved by Senate and is available to all students on the Moodle landing page.

3.3 Teaching Development

Transformation and decolonisation concepts and theories have been integrated into the Early Career Academic Advancement Program (ECAAP) to promote inclusive and equitable learning and teaching practices. Ten (10) early career academics attended the session.

All faculties nominated newly appointed academics to participate in the Beginning Your Journey (BYJ) programme, with 46 participants in the first semester. An adapted online version of the programme was repurposed for the Medical School, to ensure that educators on the clinical platform align with the humanising pedagogical ethos of the University.

The Teaching Enhancement Programme (TEP) includes a short learning programme (SLP) designed to facilitate the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives in the curriculum. Eight (8) academics enrolled for the SLP and followed through with the five contact sessions.

An integrated workload policy for academic staff has been revised and a new workload model has been developed. Senate decided at the June meeting that the workload model will be piloted in all faculties for a year and a progress report will be submitted by the end of 2025.

3.4 Technology-rich Learning and Teaching and the Virtual Academy

Nelson Mandela University's Virtual Academy has been established and now has a website: Home - Virtual Academy, which provides an overview of the purpose of the Virtual Academy and its progress. The Virtual Academy will assist in enhancing institutional capacity to address the demands of an increasingly digital world and advancements in AI. Human Technology Interaction and the needed mindset change efforts constitute one of the six Institutional Culture Signature Programmes (iHuman), which will be launched before the end of the year. An application for funding to appoint a Professor of Human-Technology Interaction (HTI) to lead the Virtual Academy has been approved and the position will be advertised in the second semester of 2024.

4. Engaged, innovative scholarship culture that generates knowledge recognised for its contribution to sustainability

4.1 Research Support and Management (RSM)

Talent Continuity and Postgraduate Supervisory Capacity
It is of concern that, of the 76 academic staff members due to retire between 2024 and 2029, 25 are full professors and 12 are associate professors. Furthermore, 11 of the 20 directors of research entities are approaching retirement age. In addition, of the University's 95 NRF-rated researchers, 24 are Black and 35 are female. This flags the need for targeted interventions to develop talent continuity strategies that ensure the University diversifies the profile of the professoriate and rated researchers.

There is increasing pressure on postgraduate supervisory capacity at Master's and PhD levels. This hinders the University's ability to retain talented postgraduate students and train the next generation of researchers. A strategy will be developed in consultation with the Deanery to allow Research Associates, HEAVAs and Postdoctoral Research Fellows to supervise postgraduate students to mitigate this challenge, while also expanding the pool of mentors for emerging and mid-career researchers to strengthen the professoriate pipeline.

National Awards
At a ceremony in Mpumalanga in August, the South African Women in Science Awards (SAWISA) announced Faculty of Health Sciences Executive Dean, Professor Zukiswa Zingela, as its 2024 Distinguished Woman Researcher.

Mandela University Press
Nelson Mandela University, in partnership with African Sun Media, launched the first university press in the Eastern Cape on 30 July. The Press will publish six books in 2024. The event also served to launch the book *Achieving Nelson Mandela University?* edited by Professor Sibongile Muthwa and Dr Denver Webb. This publication is an account of the University since the merger in 2005, reflecting on its history and serving to inform future directions.

4.2 Postgraduate Support

Overall, from January to August 2024, 372 Honours, 540 Master's and 286 Doctoral scholarships were awarded. Of these 1 198 awards, 86% of the beneficiaries were Black and 66% were women. The projected investment in postdoctoral and research fellowships for the 2024 academic year is R30m. In total, 133 postdoctoral and research fellowships were awarded over the review period, of these 78% are Black and 44% are women.

Nelson Mandela University has leveraged funding from the NRF and DHET to provide the support and training needed for academic staff to attain higher degrees. There are 11 active Thuthuka grant holders, of whom 82% are Black and 73% are women. The Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP) currently funds four academics, while the DHET-funded New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) cohort comprises 17 academics, of which all are Black and 59% are women.

Over the period under review, a combined investment of R1.2m was awarded from the UCDG funding to 37 early-career researchers for research running costs, teaching relief, and conference participation. Of the 37 grant recipients, 65% were Black and 60% were women.

4.3 Internationalisation and Strengthening African Partnerships

The University has been on a transformative journey of boosting student recruitment efforts in under-represented regions and increasing its partnerships and collaborations with universities in BRICS countries and on the African, South American, and Asian continents.

African Partnerships and Collaboration Project (APCP)
In June, the International Office (IO) participated in the Respectech Conference in Abuja, Nigeria to showcase Nelson Mandela University's academic offerings to a targeted audience. From 19 to 25 July 2024, a strategic delegation led by the Vice-Chancellor visited Nigeria and Ghana in West Africa as part of the second leg of the APCP to build equalising partnerships and collaborations on the African continent. This trip facilitated the signing of MOUs with the University of Lagos and the University of the Cape Coast while laying the groundwork for collaboration with the University of Ibadan and further growing the relationship with the University of Ghana.

Asia
On 28 June, a delegation from Hubei University of Technology (HBUT) visited Nelson Mandela University, with the two universities signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish an official partnership. During this quarter, a doctoral student in Architecture, Kawthar Jeewa, was invited to present her research on the decolonisation of architecture at an international conference in China.

International Student Recruitment
Strategic efforts to turn around declining international student enrolments are bearing fruit. The transfer of the international undergraduate applications function to the Registrar's Office from 1 April 2024 is an example. Since the transfer, there has been a significant increase in international undergraduate applications received for 2025: a total of 2 225, compared to 1 210 at the same time last year. Moreover, acceptance rates have also improved.

4.4 Innovation

An Innovation Indaba to catalyse African-driven innovation was held on 26 July 2024. With the theme *"Innovation in an African Context",* this event brought together entrepreneurs, students, researchers, investors, and creatives from across the continent to discuss the unique innovation challenges and opportunities within Africa. PVinsight, a firm spun out of the Department of Physics, celebrated its tenth anniversary in August. PVinsight is the only accredited mobile laboratory testing service for solar panels in South Africa.

4.5 Library and Information Services

In alignment with the University's commitment to promoting open access, the library has actively participated in Transformational Agreements (TAs) facilitated by the South African National Library and Information Consortium. The library budget incorporates purchases from small vendors

specialising in African literature, to support the transformation agenda and promote African scholarship. LIS is also equipping all branch libraries with assistive devices and technologies, and the Second Avenue Campus library now has an assistive technology room exclusively for special needs students. It is fully accessible to students using wheelchairs and contains a braille embosser to print articles in braille.

5. Transformative institutional culture that promotes diversity and social cohesion

5.1 Institutional Public Lectures

Mandela University's Institutional Public Lectures (IPLs) foster a vibrant African intellectual culture by inviting diverse communities into the university space to engage with contributions by pre-eminent speakers. Six of the seven IPLs have taken place to date, with the first Science IPL held yesterday on this Campus.

5.2 Indigenous Knowledge Systems

At the end of August, Mandela University co-hosted a conference on *"African Thought and Indigenous Knowledge: A Portal for Health and Wellbeing"*, in collaboration with the three other universities in Eastern Cape, the provincial Department of Health, and the Traditional Healers and Herbalists Association. This significant conference reflected a growing body of intellectual and programmatic work being undertaken within the University to engage with the plurality of knowledge systems. Fourteen universities from across our national system participated.

The Eco-Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) programme is now in its second year. The School of Governmental and Social Sciences and its partners hosted 90 school learners, community leaders and elders in an Eco-IKS workshop on 15 August. Titled *Science is Everywhere*, this collaboration brought together Khoisan communities convened by the Gamtoer indigenous communities, several high schools, and academics.

5.3 Engagement

The University celebrated Mandela Day on 18 July with a week of activities coordinated and facilitated by the Engagement Office, in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the Port Elizabeth Community Chest, and the Zwide Development Forum. Activities included arts and crafts at Dora Nginza Hospital children's ward, a visit to the Ekuphumleni Elderly Home, and a mobile law clinic in Zwide. The annual #Coding4Mandela movement, hosted by Tangible Africa and the Computing Sciences Department, was a highlight, involving a record high of 32 000 young people in South Africa and abroad.

5.4 Transformation

The Transformation Office (TO) initiated a roadshow with the University's faculties to increase awareness of the 5-year Institutional Transformation Plan (ITP) 2023–2027 and the role of the TO in coordinating, supporting, and facilitating its implementation. Advocacy and training areas of focus have recently included gender-based violence, disability, mental health, pride, and equality and diversity. Harassment and sexual offences constitute most of the cases reported to the TO,

with a concerning spike in the number of intimate-partner violence (IPV) cases. We are reporting in-depth to Council on this twice a year, in the second and fourth quarter respectively.

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

In June, Council launched its seminar series with the Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (*Cri*SHET) co-hosting the inaugural webinar on *The Political Economy of South African Higher Education*. In the same month, the Chair hosted a hybrid workshop, *Decentred Critical University Studies in a Techno-Science Society*, funded by the NRF in collaboration with TIMS and the ACUSAfrica network. The workshop aimed to advance critical conversations across disciplines about the future of higher education in Africa and included a pre-launch of the book *Emancipatory Imaginations: Advancing Critical University Studies*.

5.6 Centre for Women and Gender Studies (CWGS) and the DSI-NRF SARChI Chair in African Feminist Imagination (the Chair)

During Women's Month, the CWGS and the Chair hosted the Phyllis Ntantala and Prudence Mabele Lecture with Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah and Koketso Moeti speaking on *Black Feminist Work(s)*. Prof Babalwa Magoqwana co-hosted the second webinar in the Council seminar series on the *Meanings and Possibilities of the Ministerial Task Team Report on Gender-Based Violence/Harm in South African Universities Today*.

5.7 Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training (CIPSET)

CIPSET is promoting engaged transdisciplinary research between natural scientists, social scientists, and coastal fishing communities to transform the social relations of power and knowledge production. The Centre collaborates with women farmworkers, small-scale fishers, and marginalised youth by considering what possibilities and alternatives can be built into universities and colleges. It is a key player in the youth employability work of the University.

CIPSET generates innovative, transdisciplinary scholarship commissioned by partners such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the National Skills Funds (NSF). The publications of the Centre recognise that socially useful work and vocational learning take place in a diversity of formal, non-formal and informal learning settings including TVET and community colleges, formal and informal workplaces, homes, and the collective practices of socio-economically marginalised communities. Furthermore, CIPSET explores the perspectives of young people on the way(s) in which education and training can intervene in unemployment and contribute to the development of sustainable livelihoods, especially amongst youth who make their living in the informal sector of the economy.

5.8 HIV and AIDS Research Unit

The HIV and AIDS Research Unit is collaborating with UNICEF, UNFPA and Global Canada on a Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) project for adolescent boys and girls. The Unit is part of a study on the challenges of people in serodiscordant relationships (where one partner

has HIV and the other does not) with Walter Sisulu University, the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta Georgia, and the National Health Laboratory Services.

6. Enhancing student living and learning experiences

6.1 Student Housing

Student housing creates transformative living and learning environments that foster holistic development, inclusivity, and community engagement. Collaborations with internal partners permit various other development opportunities, for example, Emthonjeni offers a series of mental health talks in all residences. Other initiatives include the Ebuhlanti and Singamadoda Men's Programmes, the Women in Leadership (WIL) programme, Madibaz Sport, and the Green Campus Initiative.

6.2 Student Governance and Development

Various student leadership development programmes are offered to foster responsible, democratic citizenship. For example, nearly 400 students enrolled for the Leaders for Change programme, while the LeadHER Women Empowerment Programme engaged 156 women students. A further 252 students have been accepted into the 2024 online Beyond the Classroom (BtC) development programme.

6.3 Student Entrepreneurship and Youth Employability

GradStar Top 100
The GradStar Top 100 programme recognises the Top 100 university students across South Africa and connects them with potential employers and business mentors. A total of 33 Mandela University students were announced as among the most employable students of 2024. The University is in fifth position among the 19 participating institutions.

Student Entrepreneurship Awards
At the Eastern Cape Women Entrepreneur Awards held on 15 August, Mandela University's honour's student in agricultural sciences, Bongeka Gebuza, won the youth category prize for her promising rabbit farming venture, Khanyisa Agro-Organics Enterprise. The chairpersons of the Student Women Economic Empowerment Programme (SWEEP), Nelisiwe Sishange and Phuthego Nthoke, represented the University on a UK residential knowledge exchange study from 25 May to 1 June. In addition, Enactus President, Katekani Mabunda, received the Evan Poulos Leadership Excellence Award at the Enactus South Africa National Exposition in Johannesburg in July.

Dr Thobekani Lose, head of the Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator (CfERI) received an Honorary Fellowship at the Centre for Business and Economic Research (CBER) in London. Dr Lose was one of three selected from 31 applicants based on their outstanding contribution to entrepreneurship education and business research.

6.4 Student Wellness

There has been a concerning increase in student pregnancies since the start of 2024 to date. Over the same period, the uptake of contraceptives also increased, with more than 1 100 consultations. One hundred and eighty-nine (189) students remain on Anti Retro-Viral Therapy (ART), of which four were initiated during June and July, whilst three students were transferred out. The demand for nutritional packs continues to exceed supply, with 1 200 nutritional packs issued for June and July in Gqeberha, and 120 on the George Campus.

SHS collaborates with Emthonjeni Student Wellness (ESW) to advance inclusive access to holistic mental health support for students. A total of 1 223 students consulted over 2 726 sessions from the start of the academic year to 19 August 2024. It is of concern that more attempted suicide cases have been reported.

6.5. Madibaz Sport

In this quarter, just under 300 Nelson Mandela University students participated in tournaments hosted by University Sport South Africa (USSA) in rugby, volleyball, rowing, netball, hockey, squash, and karate. From a transformation perspective, it was noteworthy that an all-male team from Mandela University participated in the inaugural USSA male netball championship where they placed ninth out of 17 participating universities.

6.6. Universal Accessibility and Disability Services (UADS)

The Universal Accessibility and Disability Services (UADS), in collaboration with *Cri*SHET, hosted a Disability Indaba on *Advancing University Access* in August at the Khanyisa Special School for Visually Impaired Learners in KwaDwesi. The University embraces the principles of universal access design with learning and teaching venues being modified to enable wheelchair access and seating. Additionally, resting benches have been installed in certain areas to accommodate staff and students with mobility impairments.

7. Enabling systems and infrastructure that promote an exceptional experience for students, employees and key stakeholders

7.1. Human Resources

Talent Acquisition
The turnaround time for filling vacancies has improved, with 19 appointments made from 1 June to July 31. Of the 105 appointments made since the beginning of the year, 74% were from underrepresented groups, while 54% were female, and 3% were employees living with a disability. The University has achieved or exceeded the Economically Active Population (EAP) in all demographics except for African males and African females with -20.5% and -3.3% underrepresentation respectively.

A newly reconstituted Employment Equity (EE) committee will monitor the achievement of EE targets. A new EE Plan for 2024-2029 is being compiled and all relevant stakeholders will be

consulted. Taken over a five-year period, the University's employment equity profile has been shifting in the right direction.

Senior Management Appointments
Professor Judy Peter commenced as the new Senior Director of the International Office on 1 July, while Ms Vuyo Bongela will be the acting Dean of Students until 31 October 2024. Professor Azwinndini Muronga was appointed the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research, Innovation and Internationalisation and will commence his term on 1 October.

Talent Retention
A total of 29 (12 Academic and 17 PASS) employees left the employ of the University for the period 1 June to 31 July 2024. Most of the terminations for this period (45%) were due to resignations, while 24% were due to retirements.

Management has commenced a review of the remuneration philosophy and strategy to ensure that the University can retain scarce and critical skills, particularly that of academics. There has been notable progress in harmonising remuneration and benefits, with a shift in focus from Basic Salary plus Benefits to Total Guaranteed Package (TGP). A costing exercise of the academic scale mapping to the midpoint compa-ratio was completed and approved after the 2024 salary increases.

Institutional Culture
Executive Management has approved an institutional culture conceptual framework and strategy, which includes six signature programmes to cultivate a transformative, values-driven institutional culture. These institutional culture interventions were recently presented to the Middle Management Forum and Senate for input and will be launched in a phased manner from September to December.

Employee Wellness
Employee wellness remains a priority and various interventions are ongoing to promote holistic health and wellbeing. From the beginning of the year up to the end of August 2024, 46 wellness cases have been reported to the University's Occupational Health and Wellness Clinic, of which 24 were related to mental health. The University's internal counselling services are available to all employees and 137 staff across all categories utilised these services during the same timeframe. Of the top ten problems presented, stress related to the work environment remains the most frequently reported. For the year to date, 993 staff utilised the primary health care service, with family planning being the most frequently accessed service. HIV testing and counselling services have screened 71 staff with 6% testing positive.

7.2. Information and Communication Technology Services

In the drive towards digital transformation, connectivity with Wi-Fi-covered areas is being densified and extended to areas most frequented by students, such as shuttle stops. Wi-Fi connectivity was upgraded in 145 lecture venues across all campuses, and a 24-hour lab equipped with a multi-function printer is fully operational for those who need access to computing resources.

The new online application system that went live on 1 April 2024 has seen more than 120 000 applications submitted for the 2025 academic year. The system offers a functionality whereby an applicant can digitally track the status of their application. Support for postgraduate enrolments has been provided through the Postgraduate Research System (PGRS). In addition, a Postdoctoral research fellows application system will go live in September 2024.

7.3. Infrastructure Services and Space Optimisation

Efforts to expand student accommodation are underway, and work has restarted on the portion of the stalled project to build Blocks 7 and 8 of the new residences on North Campus. The anticipated completion date is 17 January 2025.

Energy security
The procurement process to source photovoltaic energy solutions, which will be integrated with the additional generators, restarted in August 2024 and is due to be completed by December 2025. This will extend coverage to buildings previously not linked to a backup power supply (residences in particular).

Water management
The water crisis in the Mandela Metro has abated, with dams around 70% full mid-year. The University's water management interventions have enabled it to cope with municipal water interruption. The University will also install an additional 1-megaliter water reservoir to enhance storage capacity and manage fire risks around the George Campus.

7.4. Protection Services

Given the increase in crime rates across South Africa, there is a pressing need to adopt a closed campus approach, bolstered by stringent access control infrastructure. In addressing this issue, Nelson Mandela University launched its Campus Community Safety Forum, in collaboration with the South African Police Service (SAPS), on 19 July. Later in July, the University convened a Safety and Security Indaba where stakeholders presented a draft Safety and Security Strategy 2024-2030 to the University community.

7.5 Communication and Marketing

The rollout of the Signs and Symbols project on all seven campuses is near completion. These signal what the University stands for thus playing a significant role in transformation. Mandela Month provided an opportunity to foreground several community engagement projects on the University's social media platforms, and a celebration concert brought together a full house of students and staff at the end of July. In celebration of Women's Month, legendary South African jazz saxophonist McCoy Mrubata headlined the Vice-Chancellor's Cultural Evening on 10 August.

8. Enhance long-term financial sustainability through effective resource mobilisation and responsible resource stewardship

8.1 Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement (SRMA)

The target for 2024 is to mobilise at least R95m for bursaries and scholarships to support undergraduate missing middle and postgraduate students. By the end of August 2024, nearly R55 million was received, with R39.4 million still to be paid. The target for engagement projects in 2024 is R14m and by the end of August, more than R11.5m had been received. Payment is still to be made for an additional R2.7 million secured. The public sector donors, particularly the SETAs, are the main sources of funding, with a good spread of donors per sector. This is due to concerted efforts to diversify the donor base.

To date, 641 students have received bursaries from the income mobilised through the Nelson Mandela University Trust, most of whom (91%) are Black. Almost 20% of the mobilised funding has been allocated to postgraduate students, primarily Postgraduate Diploma and Honours students.

The University has also allocated or administered bursaries and merit awards for 3 764 students, excluding postgraduate research scholarships. As of 3 September, there were 10 994 concession applications, of which 3 176 have been awarded. Of this total, 4 084 are now funded by NSFAS, while 2 477 requests were rejected. To date, there are 19 133 registered NSFAS recipients.

8.2 Short-term Financial Planning

The financial position at the end of July reflects a net positive variance due to subsidy and tuition fees, and the cash flow of the University is sound. Due to stagnant subsidy, the capping of fees, and an increase in bad debts, Council permitted an increase in the salary benchmark to 66.5% for 2024 to 2026. The University approved a total salary increase comprising a 3.87% recurring and a 2.13% once-off increase, despite the average subsidy and tuition fee increase for 2024 being limited to 2.3%.

8.3 Long-term Financial Planning

The Sustainability and Institutional Viability Task Team (SIVVT) is spearheading interventions to promote long-term sustainability. As part of our institutional culture interventions, the *Masonge Siphuhlise* campaign will encourage every employee to assess how to reduce waste, enhance strategy-aligned resource mobilisation and allocation, and promote institutional viability.

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

The current B-BBEE certificate, with a Level 4 discounted to a Level 5, expires on 6 December 2024. B-BBEE verification for 2023 is underway, and the consultant has calculated a pre-audit score of Level 4 with no discounting. This aligns with the 2023 target outlined in the B-BBEE strategy approved by Council. Verification timelines have been agreed and the estimated sign-off date is on or before 31 October 2024.

9. Conclusion

As Nelson Mandela University positions itself as a dynamic African university in the service of society, it is implementing wide-ranging interventions to advance transformation as we strive to promote a socially just, inclusive, and sustainable future for all. To this end, the University pursues the cultivation of an inclusive and affirming institutional culture, that liberates the human potential of all students, staff, and communities. Against this background, we thank the Council for its judicious oversight as we collectively advance our gains in pursuing our purpose and identity as a university carrying the iconic name of Nelson Mandela.