



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

28 November 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

This final quarterly report for 2024 presents selected highlights focused on sustainability and stewardship, which are essential in advancing the strategic aspirations of Nelson Mandela University as a socially embedded institution for the public good. The report highlights ongoing efforts to establish a firm social justice orientation to our efforts to address current operational needs while promoting long-term sustainability within an increasingly complex and volatile higher education landscape.

2. VISION 2030 AND STRATEGIC TRAJECTORIES

Vision 2030 seeks to offer a diverse range of life-changing educational experiences that liberate human potential for a better world. Key transversal strategic priority areas such as ocean sciences, the medical school, revitalising the humanities, and transdisciplinary sustainability sciences make a significant contribution towards achieving this mission.

2.1. Ocean Sciences

The Institute for Coastal and Marine Research (CMR) promotes the University's environmental stewardship and sustainable livelihoods institutional research theme through its own living resources and marine food security research. The CMR supports the growing field of marine waste research, through collaborations with the African Marine Waste Network, the Sustainable Seas Trust, and other stakeholders. It takes part in environmental awareness events and engages with the public on matters of environmental sustainability.

2.2. Medical School

The Faculty of Health Sciences recognises the critical role that health education plays in achieving and maintaining the sustainable development goals for the country and globally. The Medical School recently received provisional accreditation for an additional two years which will enable the delivery of years five and six of the programme, taking it to the historic milestone of qualifying the first cohort of "Mandela Doctors" by the end of 2026.

In October, the University leadership met with critical stakeholders from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the national and provincial Departments of Health, and Provincial Treasury, to craft an action plan to support the viability and sustainability of the medical school. The path to sustainability includes the required disbursements of DHET funding for staffing and infrastructure developments for the medical programme at the Missionvale Campus.

2.3. Revitalising the Humanities

The Faculty of Humanities collaborated with the Dean of Learning and Teaching and the Faculty of Education in hosting the 2024 International Higher Education Teaching and

Learning Association Conference. This was the first conference to be held in Africa since its inception in 2010. Held from 2-4 October, and themed *"Universities as change agents in society: imagining social innovation for sustainable futures"*, keynote speakers and delegates discussed sustainability in all its facets. Conference delegates came from five continents, and 12 countries, with a strong representation from Africa.

In an accolade for Nelson Mandela University, Professor Uchenna Okeja from the Faculty of Humanities has been elected to the membership of the American Antiquarian Society (AAS). He joins a select group that includes 14 United States presidents and more than 75 Pulitzer Prize winners, all celebrated for their achievements in academia or public service.

The Faculty of Humanities is close to completing the process of streaming the BA (General) qualification into career pathways. One of these transdisciplinary streams will be the first BA in Digital Humanities in the country. In addition, a short learning programme (SLP) for the Social Consciousness and Sustainable Futures Course (SFSFC) was developed in 2024, and this will be phased into the Faculties of Humanities, Education and Law from 2025.

2.4. Transdisciplinary Sustainability Sciences

Nelson Mandela University participated in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings and achieved its highest score for SDG 14: Life Below Water. It ranked 96th globally out of 628 institutions and secured the second position in South Africa for this goal. The University also ranked second in South Africa for SDG 13: Climate Action.

The Mandela Institute for Sustainable Futures (MISF), currently only virtual, will focus on the establishment of the Sustainability Science Initiative for Transdisciplinary Research in collaboration with the Copernicus Sustainability Institute of Utrecht University in the Netherlands. Two project managers have been appointed to develop the structure and activities of the MISF and the steering committee will meet for the first time in December.

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

3.1. Sustainability Stewardship Across Faculties

The learning and teaching portfolio fulfils a multifaceted role in promoting sustainable practices and fostering a culture of stewardship across all faculties. The University has numerous interdisciplinary projects and initiatives underway.

One notable collaboration is that of Architecture students from the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology (EBET) and Human Movement Science students from the Faculty of Health Sciences, who designed a therapeutic courtyard for Merryvale School's autism wing. Architecture and Engineering are also partnering in a novel research project documenting the architectural heritage of indigenous villages in the remote Eastern Cape, until now undocumented.

In another project, the Law Faculty collaborated with the Cyberculture Foundation and the Faculty of EBET for the Moot Court Competition, bringing high school learners across Nelson Mandela Bay together to argue a cyberbullying case before a panel of judges.

The Faculty of Law celebrated the launch of HiveLaw at the Nelson Mandela University Law Clinic in July. This groundbreaking technology marks a significant milestone for the future of legal education in South Africa. By integrating HiveLaw into our Law Clinic, and the LLB curriculum through a compulsory final-year legal practice module, the University is providing students with invaluable experience to set them apart in the job market.

The Faculty of Education is reimagining resource mobilisation by developing short-learning programmes (SLPs) to generate third-stream income. This includes the launch of two new SLPs on autism, to be offered in the first semester of 2025.

The Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences implements projects aimed at empowering local communities through economic development, with significant contributions toward sustainable practices. The Just Energy Transition project, which produced a high-impact report recognised at a national level, has been a highlight in this regard.

3.2. Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards for Students and Staff

The excellence of 24 top students and graduates was recognised at Nelson Mandela University's annual student Academic Achievers' Awards ceremony. This was held in conjunction with the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards for staff, where the University recognised its top academic, and professional, administrative, and service staff in the categories of research, teaching, engagement, innovation, creative outputs, and institutional support, at the Boardwalk Convention Centre on 24 October. The Acting VC, Professor André Keet, congratulated students, graduates, and staff who received a total of 76 awards for contributing to excellence in Higher Education.

3.4. Readiness Plans for the 2025 Academic Year

The latest application statistics and trends indicate that the admissions for 2025 are proceeding well. This is the first year that the University is using a new admission ranking system which has a bearing on the comparative numbers. This year, students are admitted provisionally until January next year when the matric results are available and can be ranked for final admission and registration later.

The admissions for first-time entering undergraduate students for 2025 are currently 53 369 compared to 21 303 at the same time last year. This is a 152% growth in admissions and the target of 7 350 will be reached even if only 15% register.

Ensuring that postgraduate applications are timeously processed and converted to enrolments is an important driver of academic reputation and sustainability. As of 12

November, the University had 1 687 postgraduate admissions for 2025 compared to 1 819 at the same time last year.

In January 2025, the enrolment caps will be applied when processing firm offers and applicants will be ranked from highest to lowest admission scores (AS). Decisions regarding residence allocations will be integrated with the confirmation of firm offers. Applicants will have a five-working-day period to confirm their acceptance of an offer. If no response is received within this timeframe, the offer will be withdrawn, and the place will be reallocated to candidates on the waiting list.

The Enrolment Management Committee (EMC) will meet weekly during the 2025 registration period to closely monitor enrolments so that corrective interventions can be implemented, if necessary. Communication with applicants will emphasise the importance of confirming their intention to register regardless of funding status. The National Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has opened applications for funding for the 2025 academic year and the closing date is 31 December 2024.

3.5. Institutional Enrolment Plan 2026-2030

The DHET requested all public higher education institutions to submit institutional enrolment plans for 2026-2030 by 31 October 2024. Through a bottom-up process, the setting of institutional enrolment and output targets was guided by faculty enrolment plans for the same timeframe. In this way, enrolment growth will be guided by institutional and faculty strategic trajectories, and resource capacity constraints, to promote sustainable enrolment growth. The University has adopted a scenario of slower growth at the undergraduate level up to 2030 to ensure that the students receive a quality learning and teaching experience, and has projected higher growth in postgraduate enrolments, although from a low base.

The DHET will host an enrolment planning workshop at the end of November 2024, following which universities may be requested to revise their targets. The final enrolment plan will be tabled at Senate and Council for approval before it is submitted to the Department by the end of June 2025.

3.6. Learning and Teaching Development and Support

The LT Collab has augmented Council funds with the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) and Siyaphumelela funding, helping to sustain our student success support programmes. The LT Collab is the implementation partner of the DHET for the rollout of the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) at all 26 public universities.

The LT Collab coordinated the development of the institutional audit improvement plan (IP). The final plan will be submitted to the Council on Higher Education (CHE) by 30 December and implemented in 2025.

3.6.1 Teaching Development

Teaching Development has engaged in key national initiatives, including the DHET-hosted “Think Tank: National Framework for Enhancing Academics as University Teachers”. This focused on crucial themes such as transformation within South African universities and the Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) framework. Insights from the National Academic Development Landscape project further emphasised the importance of aligning our institutional practices with national strategies to ensure academic sustainability.

3.6.2 Learning Development

Learning Development continues to offer various support initiatives, such as Student Success Coaching and other projects nested in academic programmes such as Supplemental Instruction (SI), First-Year Success (FYS), Academic Literacy Writing Programme (ALWP), and mentoring and tutoring. These initiatives provide over 800 students with important academic and life skills to promote academic success.

3.7. 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 its purpose and progress. The Virtual Academy will enhance institutional capacity to address the demands of an increasingly digital world and advancements in artificial intelligence (AI). The Professor of Human-Technology Interaction (HTI) position was advertised in October. Human Technology Interaction and the needed mindset change efforts constitute one of the six Institutional Culture Signature Programmes (iHuman), launched in September.

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

4.1. Research Management

Nelson Mandela University's research income has increased significantly over the past three years. A large portion (46.5%) of the funding is from the National Research Foundation (NRF), which supports research chairs, rated researchers, national equipment funds, travel and conference grants, and research grants for specific programs aimed at mid-career to established researchers. Other sources of funding are multinational grants (27.4%), grants from national funders (13.3%), and research contracts (12.8%).

The research outputs produced by Nelson Mandela University academics and associates have been on an upward trajectory since 2022. Our Research Chairs attracted more than R41 million in 2024, which includes NRF and other external research grants and contracts. Of concern, however, is the sustainability of Research Chairs post the NRF funding cycle.

4.2. Postgraduate Support and Enhancing Research Capacity

As of 25 October 2024, 381 Honours, 585 Master's and 320 Doctoral scholarships were awarded with funding from Council, the NRF and other external funders. Of these awards, 1 113 have been taken up, and 84% of the recipients were Black (African, Coloured, Indian, and Asian) and 69% were women.

The Port Elizabeth Women's Club has invested R2.5 million towards bursaries for female postgraduate students at Nelson Mandela University across various disciplines.

Over the period under review, a combined investment of R1.3 million was awarded to 40 early-career researchers for research running costs, teaching relief and conference participation. Of the 40 grant recipients, 26 (65%) were Black and 23 (58%) were women.

4.3. Internationalisation

International enrolments are key to building educational diversity, advancing sustainability, and strengthening stewardship. We are pleased to report a significant increase in international undergraduate applications received for 2025, with a total of 2 225 compared to 1 210 at the same time last year. The 2025 postgraduate applications remain constant when compared to 2024.

4.3.1 African Partnerships and Collaboration Project

Our drive to foster collaboration with partner universities in Africa continues to bear fruit with the initiation of five new MoUs through departmental-led collaborations. These include BA ISAGO University (Botswana) and National University of Science and Technology (Zimbabwe) through the Faculty of EBET, and the University of Eldoret and University of Kabianga (Kenya) through the Centre for Broadband Communication in the Faculty of Science. The Mandela International Office will continue to provide support to ensure the sustainability of these collaborations.

During the University's Research Week in September, a panel discussion was convened on Intra-Africa, BRICS, and EU Collaborations. The session aimed to explore the complexities and opportunities of such engagements, showcasing the impactful work being done by Mandela University staff on the continent.

4.3.2 UK and Europe

A delegation from the University of Sussex visited Nelson Mandela University in September to identify possible areas for research collaboration. The University attended the 34th Annual Conference of the European Association for International Education (EAIE) from 17-20 September to market the University as a destination for study abroad and exchange students. After the conference in Toulouse, France, delegates visited strategic partner universities in Germany including Oldenburg, Hohenheim (Stuttgart), Tübingen, and Hochschule Reutlingen.

4.4. Innovation

Winners of the annual Student Innovation Pitching Competition, from 2022 to 2024, had the opportunity to exhibit their inventions at the 2024 Innovation Summit in Cape Town in September. The Summit is a premier event that brings innovators, investors, and industry leaders together to showcase groundbreaking technologies and explore collaborative opportunities within the innovation ecosystem.

4.5. Library and Information Services

The library has acquired three 3D printers for the South Campus Library and the vision is to establish a Maker Space hub, supporting a sustainable model of learning that emphasises creativity, problem-solving and the practical application of knowledge. The library subscribes to 114 databases consisting of book and journal packages, abstract and citation databases, and economic and research metric databases. In addition, 234 new single-title e-books have been taken up into the collection for 2024. Vendors have introduced several AI-driven tools to library databases, which enhance resource discovery, research efficiency and overall user experience.

5. TRANSFORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE THAT PROMOTES DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

Nelson Mandela University has hosted seven Institutional Public Lectures (IPLs) in 2024, with three taking place in September. This included the first Science IPL hosted on the George Campus focusing on Social-Ecological Systems with Dr Albert van Jaarsveld delivering a keynote address titled *"System Approaches to Fast-track Sustainable Wellbeing"*. The Raymond Mhlaba lecture, titled *"The Land Question and Labour Tenancy in South Africa Today"*, was organised by the Faculty of Humanities and was presented by Professor Richard Lewin. The 14th Steve Bantu Biko lecture was presented by Advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi who dissected the role of the South African legal system in Biko's Death.

5.1. Engagement Office

The Engagement Office (EO) oversees more than 40 active projects while collaborating across the University to identify and support engagement initiatives. This included establishing a new Hub of Convergence on the George Campus.

There has been notable work in this quarter with the Sports, Arts and Culture hub establishing a steering committee named "Thembalabantu" that brings together sports organisations from Missionvale and nearby communities. The Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) hub facilitated a workshop for the Nelson Mandela Bay Traditional Leaders Legacy Project, focusing on Dora Nginza and Cecelia Makhiwane. The Student Hubs of Convergence (SHoC) actively participated in the Mina Cup drive, Grab and Go events, and a two-day event with the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme. The HoC also draws various faculties into the Student, Nutrition, Advocacy, and Communication (SNAC) project.

5.2. Transformation Office

The Transformation Office (TO) continues to promote equality, social inclusion and awareness through various initiatives and partnerships. The TO was involved in the Black Lawyers Association debate and a webinar with UADS that explored gender-based violence (GBV) against women and children with disabilities. Additionally, partnerships with the Eastern Cape Liquor Board, Gender Dynamix, and Stellenbosch University's SRC facilitated discussions on substance abuse, GBV, and trans rights.

The TO is developing several short learning programmes (SLPs) as an alternative source of revenue to promote sustainable stewardship. In October, First Responder Training was conducted for two groups of 20 beneficiaries associated with the Kolisi Foundation. Other SLPs in development cover topics such as workplace harassment, positive masculinities, social justice mediation, gender identities and GBV.

5.3. Centre for Women and Gender Studies (CWGS) and the DSI-NRF SARCHI Chair in African Feminist Imagination (AFEMI)

The CWGS contributes to student engagement and sustainable stewardship through its involvement in the Social Consciousness and Sustainable Futures (SCSF) programme, which is project-managed by centre director Professor Babalwa Magoqwana. The DSI-NRF SARCHI Chair in African Feminist Imagination (AFEMI), Professor Pumla Dineo Gqola, also delivered a presentation for the SCSF programme in August 2024 entitled '*On Makings of Gender and Sexuality*'.

The most significant event for the quarter was the 2024 Summer School focused on the Internationalisation of Gender Studies, which the CWGS co-hosted with the Centre for Interdisciplinary Women and Gender Studies (ZFG) from Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg. CWGS also partnered with Council to host the second instalment in the Council Seminar Series, focusing on the Ministerial Task Team's Report on sexual harassment and GBV in South African universities.

AFEMI Chair Professor Pumla Dineo Gqola was awarded the inaugural Canex Prize for Publishing in Africa for her book, *Female Fear Factory: Unravelling Patriarchy's Culture of Violence*, in October this year. This is the third major award for this book. The new Mandela University Press has published *Inyathi ibuzwa kwaba'phambili: African Women's Intellectual Histories in Southern Africa*, edited by Professor Babalwa Magoqwana (Mandela University), Siphokazi Magadla (Rhodes University), and Athambile Masola (University of Cape Town).

5.4. Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET)

The 2024 Advancing Critical University Studies Across Africa (ACUSAfrica) conference hosted at Makerere University in Uganda in October was a highlight for CriSHET. It was themed "*Leveraging critical university studies towards the practical pursuit of an Afrocentric*

university". The conference garnered significant local support, as well as a global audience and participation. The ACUSAfrica network collaborations are also beginning to bear scholarly outputs. The forthcoming *Emancipatory Imaginations: Advancing Critical University Studies* (eds. André Keet & Dina Zoe Belluigi) is based on inputs from the 2019 Winter School, which was the network's founding event.

5.5. Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies (TIMS)

TIMS has completed the report on the "Answering Mandela" focus group discussions. An institutional resource handbook is being drafted to aid the landing of the Mandela identity across various fields and divisions in the University. TIMS also continues to prioritise advancing Mandela-related academic scholarship through inter- and transdisciplinary engagements. This includes the Izibongo book project, developed with CriSHET, the Faculty of Humanities and Zolani Mkiva, Mandela's official imbongi.

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

South Africa's general elections were a major focus for CANRAD, and it also contributed to the post-election analysis report launched in August with the Mapungubwe Institute. CANRAD is also working with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and Democracy Development Programme in preparation for the 2026 local government elections and the 2029 general election. Notable research achievements include the launch of the co-edited book, *The D-Word: Perspectives on Democracy in Tumultuous Times* (African Sun Media, 2024).

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

In this quarter, the focus has been on integrating the work of CYUEE and CIPSET into a unified programme to deliver learning opportunities for developing eco-conscious livelihoods. CIPSET is building sustainable linkages between community food producers and GreenTEC's seedling production, documenting initiatives to create an educational databank on sustainable food production. The Centre's involvement with the Western Indian Ocean and Marine Science Association working group on Women in Marine Science has opened up possibilities for research and education with small-scale fishers, particularly women seaweed harvesters along the East African coastline.

5.8. Science Centre

To date, the new Science Centre has hosted 33 events, which are key platforms to promote sustainability and foster interdisciplinary learning. Two strategic committee structures have been established to oversee the Science Centre, namely, a Management and Transversal Committee. The former oversees the technical, administrative, and operational aspects of the Centre while the latter guides the substantive programmatic work.

In a first for the Eastern Cape, the Science Centre won the “Other Development” category and the Best Overall Award in the annual South African Property Owner’s Association (SAPOA) Awards 2024 in September.

6. ENHANCING STUDENT LIVING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

6.1. Student Governance and Development

The 2024-2025 Student Representative Council (SRC) elections took place in October 2024. Approximately 16 000 students, representing 48%, participated in the voting, achieving an excellent turnout that surpassed previous years. The Democratic Alliance Student Organisation (DASO) secured 79% of overall seats.

6.2. Student Entrepreneurship and Youth Employability

Madibaz Youth Entrepreneurship Lab in collaboration with the Faculty of Humanities and other partners successfully hosted the second annual Business of Arts Week. The event aimed to equip students in creative disciplines with business skills for the future.

With funding from the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), the Nelson Mandela University Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator (CfERI) was established in 2024 under the guidance of Dr Thobekani Lose. It provides an incubation programme of up to three years and other services for students, graduate entrepreneurs, unemployed youth, and young township entrepreneurs. Nelson Mandela University partnered with other universities, the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and Adapt IT, to host the inaugural Business Incubation Web Association (BIWA) with more than 300 guests over the three-day event.

Ten Graduates In Training (GITs) were appointed in collaboration with the ETDP SETA for a year, starting in April 2024. The University is working to secure a further 40 GITs in collaboration with the South African Council for Graduates Cooperative (SACGRA). It is envisaged that these GITs will be in place by the end of the year and they will be posted throughout various faculties and departments.

6.3. Student Housing

Sustainability and stewardship programmes in the residences play an important role in fostering environmentally conscious and socially responsible students. This includes water saving, planting trees, recycling, and being aware of energy efficiency. Student Housing has built a food garden using an aquaponics production system to supplement the nutrition of students receiving food parcels at our clinics.

6.4. Student Wellness

The increase in communicable diseases is concerning for Student Health Services (SHS), with 23 patients currently on treatment. Sexually transmitted infections are on the increase, especially among female students and campaigns to address this are ongoing with strategies targeting student housing.

Student hunger is an ongoing area of concern, calling for multi-faceted interventions. The LT Collab has appointed a social worker who will provide a service to Student Health Services (SHS), where student food delivery and supply is conducted. Peer helpers from ESW provide peer-led workshops on food management, and food gardens are planned and funded for 14 residences through a collaboration between the LT Collab, the Hubs of Convergence, and the Departments of Social Development Professions and Agricultural Management.

6.5. Madibaz Sport

The Madibaz Campus Sport Leagues have grown from three to six codes this year, adding value and vibrancy to student life on campus. The number of participants rose from 900 in 2023 to 1 438 in 2024. On the George Campus, the Madibaz Forest Run attracted more than 680 participants. Madibaz Golf successfully hosted the Vice-Chancellor's Golf Day in collaboration with Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement (SRMA), with a generous sponsorship from Standard Bank for the event.

6.6. Universal Accessibility and Disability Services (UADS)

UADS has increased programmes at its Ilitha Student Free Expression Space, such as Yoga Fridays, study sessions, student roundtable discussions, and games. It is working on a sustainability concept document for this space to generate revenue for maintenance.

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

The People and Operations portfolio continues to mainstream its work around institutional sustainability and improved efficiencies.

7.1. Human Resources

The University has launched six institutional culture "signature programmes" and is inviting employees and students to participate in cultivating an inclusive institutional culture. The project teams for these six programmes met in November to develop work plans for 2025 and implementation will commence in 2025.

Human Resources is reviewing several policies to ensure these are progressive and position the University as an employer of choice. Efforts to improve efficiency include reducing the turnaround time to attract a highly skilled talent pool and fill vacancies. Of the 135 appointments made during 2024, 77% have been from underrepresented groups, and 54% have been female, contributing towards a diversified workforce.

The Harmonisation project seeks to convert Basic Salary plus benefits to a Total Guaranteed Package (TGP). Furthermore, Phase 4 of the academic lag initiative aims to improve academic remuneration relative to the midpoint of the internal salary scale and this intervention will positively impact more than 370 academic staff.

A total of 56 wellness cases have been reported to Occupational Health and Wellness this year to date, of which 30 mental health cases have been managed through wellness services. Annual wellness days on George, Missionvale and South campuses over August and September included health screening services.

7.2. Information and Communication Technology Services

As part of sustainability efforts, ICT has undertaken initiatives to provide infrastructure and services efficiently and with reduced environmental impact. This includes advanced data centre cooling technologies. Server virtualisation has been strategised to 88% being virtualised and the University is increasingly investing in cloud-based services.

ICT, with the LT Collab, is driving the upgrade of the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS). To be known as FUNDA, this new version of the LMS will integrate a business intelligence tool, Intelliboard, which can integrate data from multiple data sources.

Business process improvements through automation in finance, HR, research management, academic management and student life have significantly enhanced operational efficiency. Employees and students have access to digital resources and online services through the Customer Relationship Management system and other online tools and platforms.

7.3. Infrastructure Services and Space Optimisation

The University has become more deliberate in its approach towards environmental sustainability through water and energy management solutions. The Metro's dams are currently around 81% full, and the University's focus has shifted to sustainable water security. Furthermore, a thorough review of our energy strategy resulted in the integration of photovoltaic (PV) installations with additional generators. This combined approach enables the University to ensure continuous energy supply during load shedding and power outages. Horticulture Services is promoting glass-free campuses and embracing sustainable garden management services, including clearing invasive species.

7.4. Support Services

A review of the commercialisation policy is underway with Support Services repositioning and regearing its revenue generation capacity by consolidating commercial entities such as postal services, reprographics, imaging, and events into one unit. Opportunities to optimise third-stream income will be a focal point of this pilot project.

The University has embarked on an aggressive multi-year strategy to bolster safety and security on and off campus. The ongoing fight against crime and violence cannot be won without strategic partnerships and stakeholder collaboration. To this end, the University's Campus Community Safety Forum was launched, which includes the South African Police Service (SAPS) and other key stakeholders, who will work together to ensure safer environments on campuses and in surrounding neighbourhoods.

7.5. Communication and Marketing

Campaigns that underscore the University's efforts to expand access to education, especially for underrepresented groups, continue to be supported. For example, the National Research Week and Science Week activities showcased the University's role in fostering innovation in science and technology, which is critical for addressing global sustainability challenges. In August, the University collaborated with the Mossel Bay Municipality in celebrating the announcement by the United Nations Economic Social and Cultural Council (UNESCO) that it had declared Pinnacle Point a World Heritage Site. This significant moment recognised the cultural and environmental importance of this site as a representation of living heritage, aligning with the University's commitment to fostering environmental and cultural sustainability.

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 the mobilisation of bursaries and scholarships was R95 million in 2024. As of the end of October 2024, funds mobilised totalled more than R107 million, of which just over R64.8 million had been received. This leaves more than R42 million to be paid, mostly from SETAs. To date, 687 students have received bursaries from the income mobilised through the Nelson Mandela University Trust, of whom more than 94% are Black. SRMA also mobilises funding for engagement projects, with a target of R14 million for 2024. By the end of October, more than R12.6 million had been received.

8.2. Short-Term Financial Planning

The financial position at the end of September reflects a net positive variance, with sound cash flow. The 2025 Budget Directives were approved by Executive Management in August and informed the Annual Budget for 2025. The Budget includes a decrease of 3% in

subsidy, a 4.5% increase in tuition fees, and a 6.5% increase in student accommodation fees. The University awaits the final pronouncement by the Minister on fee increases, and the SRC will be consulted in this regard before the end of November.

To date, there are 19 133 registered National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) recipients (first-time entering and senior students). The total concession applications for 2024 totalled 10 946 as of 3 September, of which 3 157 concessions have been awarded. Over 4100 students are now funded by NSFAS, while 2 876 concession requests were rejected. In preparation for 2025, Revenue Management has critically reflected on the current concession criteria including the concession appeal process, and draft amendments will be presented at the next MANCO meeting for approval.

8.3. Long-Term Financial Planning

One of the risks confronting the University remains the long-term sustainability of its various income streams. The work of the Sustainability and Institutional Viability Task Team (SIVTT) will need to be expedited to reshape operations, either to operate with less or to generate more revenue. As part of the drive to enhance the University's long-term financial sustainability, an Institutional Resource Mobilisation Strategy for 2025-2028 will serve at Council for approval. This strategy will seek to mobilise third-stream income to augment Council funding allocated to transversal Vision 2030 priority areas.

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

The University's B-BBEE verification based on the 2023 financial statements is completed. The University achieved its target of a Level 4 with no discounting. A full report will be provided to Council in the first quarter of 2025. A Level 3 is being targeted for the 2024 financial year-end, to be verified in 2025.

9. CONCLUSION

As the University approaches the end of another academic year, we remain committed to meeting current operational needs in a strategy-aligned manner while ensuring long-term sustainability. By embracing an ethos of ethical and responsible stewardship, we strive to foster an inclusive, humanising institutional culture that unlocks the full potential and talent of all our students and employees. We thank Council for its steady support over the course of 2024 and for guiding the University wisely and judiciously as it pursues its strategic aspirations.