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Independent report reveals past governance failures at UCT

The University of Cape Town (UCT) Chair of Council, Norman Arendse (SC) issued the below statement on behalf of Council, following the outcome of an independent panel investigation on governance matters at UCT.

- [Read the executive summary of the report.](#)
- [Read the report.](#)
- Find the attached voice note by the Chair of Council.

Please attribute the below statement to UCT Chair of Council, Norman Arendse (SC):

On Saturday 28 October 2023, the University of Cape Town (UCT) Council adopted the findings and recommendations of the independent panel of investigation on governance matters at UCT during the period 2018-2022. This follows Council's decision in October 2022 to establish an independent panel, whose work commenced in January 2023.

Council concluded that the findings and recommendations were rationally related to the purpose for which the panel was established and that it was substantively fair in that it reflected the oral and written reliable and credible evidence placed before it. It was also agreed that the report was procedurally fair in that all witnesses against whom adverse allegations were made, were invited to provide statements and that they were provided with a summary of the allegations to which they were required to respond.

Council acknowledges that during the period under review by the panel, it in important respects did not exercise its fiduciary responsibilities timeously and that it did not act in the best interests of the university. An example was the failure of the Council to act appropriately in relation to the report from the previous ombud, which resulted in an exodus of senior staff. We recognise that had the Council at the time fulfilled its governance role as required, the events that unfolded and emotional trauma to many individuals could have been avoided. We regret not acting sooner and we apologise unreservedly. We will be

pursuing the specific recommendations relating to those who were wronged by UCT, as recommended by the report.

We are in the process of taking remedial action and course correcting in order to restore the university community and the public's trust and confidence in us as a leading institution of higher learning. There is much to do but we are determined to get it right.

In relation to the individuals implicated in the report, we are deliberating an appropriate course of action. This will be done in line with our policies, procedures, and Code of Conduct.

We recognise that it is important to share the full executive summary and report for reasons of transparency, accountability, and in the public interest.

We thank and acknowledge the current Council who were instrumental in setting up an independent panel to investigate governance matters. We also thank current and former staff as well as those members of Council and Senate who endeavoured to act at all times in the best interests of UCT. They acted with courage and integrity. In some instances, following this path came at a high price.

Furthermore, Council extends its appreciation to the panel – Judge Lex Mpati, Judge Azhar Cachalia, Dr Bernadette Johnson and Dr Patricia Hanekom – for the detailed and important work that they have done.

We are determined to use the report as a roadmap to guide us towards a future marked by accountability and transparency, and a renewed commitment to strengthen the governance of the university.

We commit to keeping members of the UCT community and our many stakeholders informed on progress. Personal information has been redacted to comply with POPIA without affecting the substance of the report in any way.

ENDS

Issued on behalf of the UCT Council by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department