



Successful year for UCT's core business

Although media headlines tended to focus on protest in higher education, it is worth reminding ourselves of the many achievements made by colleagues at the University of Cape Town in 2016. Our core business is teaching and research and having an impact. It is what we spent 90% of our time doing. And in that regard we once again had a hugely successful year.

Research

In terms of our research, we have five new A-rated scientists. We had another four A-rated scientists have their ratings renewed. That brings our total to 40, which is one-third of all the A-rated scientists in the country. There are 26 universities – we would have seven instead of 40 if we were average.

If we include all the rated scientists, the number went up from 481 to 514 in one year, and has doubled since I became Vice-Chancellor in 2008. We have just released the research report, which is on the web. It reports on some of the huge successes of our researchers this past year. The number of publications reached a record high. Citations, which measure the impact of our research, how often it is quoted by other scientists, are also at a high and up on last year's.

The research grants that we have raised through contract research increased by 30% in the last year, exceeding the R1 billion mark, going to R1.3 billion. A significant number of foundations have supported new research initiatives. Earlier this year the AXA Research fund, a European insurance company foundation, endowed a Chair, held by Professor Mark New, Pro-VC and Director of the African Climate and Development Initiative. Just last week the Wellcome Trust announced its new Centres of Excellence and a Centre of Excellence was awarded to UCT. There are 11 in the world, 10 of them are in the UK, only one is outside of the UK, viz. here, in Infectious Diseases. The funding is in the region of R85 million over the next five years.

UCT remains the top ranked university on the continent and amongst the top in the world. In the most recent report of *Times Higher Education*, of BRICS and emerging economies, UCT is ranked fourth in the world, out of 300 universities. In April this year we were admitted to the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU), a group of what was 10 universities, all from OECD countries, and we are the 11th university, the first addition since IARU was established 10 years ago. And they chose UCT because of what we bring to that august group. We bring a hub that connects into the continent, and we are a peer in research which has many strong relationships with those universities.

We launched new start-up and spin-out companies; there were more patents issued; we have a special report on innovation, with some of the most exciting work that has been done. This excellence attracts further financial support.

The Department of Alumni and Development receipted more than R328 million in philanthropic donations in the last year. Some of those philanthropic donations come from our convocation and alumni members and I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your loyal support and for your ongoing contributions.

We launched a capital campaign called Distinguishing UCT, which is to raise our endowment from R500 million to R1 billion, so in other words we have to raise R500 million, and to date we have raised more than R100 million. We raised a significant amount of money, about R85 million so far, to launch a neurosciences institute from philanthropic money, with renovations to a building which will create a new home for neurosciences at the Groote Schuur campus.

Teaching

Moving from research to teaching, we continue to invest heavily in our academic development programmes and that has manifested in our first-year course pass rates, showing an increase amongst all students, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from advantaged backgrounds. We implemented a new admissions policy in 2016. We admitted the first cohort of students in this new policy, which balances the race targets that we've had for a long time

with affirmative action that targets socio-economic disadvantage. So we now have a set of criteria that looks at first-generation admissions, which looks at families who are dependent on social grants, kids coming from low-quintile schools, and they all get extra points now, regardless of race in the admissions process. It's too early to judge exactly the impact of that, but it is an important leadership signal nationally towards a non-racial, more equal society; towards indicating that it is not only about race, it's also about class and we want to address issues of inequality as well.

Transformation

Transformation has been the number one item on our agenda. It has been the focus of the strategic plan, approved by Senate in November and signed off by Council on 10 December. We have established a number of task teams that are looking at specific issues, such as the naming of buildings, the question of artworks, and, very importantly, the curriculum change working group that is stimulating interrogation of curricula across the university. We have had assemblies in all the faculties and many departments and engagements where people are hearing about the experiences of 'the other', sometimes for the first time, and are taking on board this sense that we all have to take on the responsibility and own the process of transformation and decolonisation.

Financial aid has been stepped up and we can be proud that we are not turning away any students who are academically eligible, and we support missing-middle students right up to the R600,000 threshold.

Perhaps one of the most significant issues is that a year ago we announced that we were going to insource the workers of six companies that had been outsourced in the 1990s. That has been a major project, successfully completed in record time. Five of the companies were insourced by 1 July, and the last, the catering company, in November. These employees are now part of the UCT family; their incomes have increased and in many cases by more than 60% as a result of this insourcing. Students certainly played a role and so did the workers and their unions. The point is that it is a significant element of transformation and, once again, something that we are proud of.

Changes in leadership

There is much more to tell you about our successes, but I also need to report on the changes that are happening at the leadership level, because they are so significant that it would be remiss not to make mention of them. In 2016 we welcomed our new Registrar, Mr. Royston Pillay. We welcomed our new Dean of Law, Professor Penny Andrews; Dean of Commerce, Professor Ingrid Woolard; Dean of Health Sciences, Professor Bongani Mayosi; and we appointed, to take office in January, the new Director of the Business School, Professor Mills (Milford) Soko. We've also appointed, to take office in January, two new Deputy Vice-Chancellors: Professor Kgethi Phakeng, who will be the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Internationalisation; and Professor Loretta Ferris, who will be taking up the position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Transformation, which also covers Student Affairs.

I want to point out that amongst that leadership group, two Deputy Vice-Chancellors and four Deans and the Registrar, seven new senior people, there are three Black men, three Black women and one White woman. Together with the first woman Dean of Engineering the year before, I think the record shows that at the senior level, we are making great strides in transformation – something we can all be proud of.

Some of our successes are unfortunately bittersweet successes. We have recently been informed that two of our leaders have been appointed as vice-chancellors at other universities. The Dean of Humanities, Professor Sakhela Buhlungu, is going to become the vice-chancellor at the University of Fort Hare, and one of our deputy vice-chancellors, Professor Francis Petersen, is to become the vice-chancellor of the University of the Free State. And just a year and a half ago, Professor Wim de Villiers, the Dean of Health Sciences, became the vice-chancellor at the University of Stellenbosch. So we are the nursery for the leadership of the country's universities and we are very proud of that, of course, but the gains of others are undoubtedly our losses.

Sincerely

Dr Max Price
Vice-Chancellor