

# EXCELLENCE, TRANSFORMATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S  
VISION FOR THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CAPE TOWN









Nobody can know the future, but a good leader can interpret the path we are on and see where we need to adjust our direction. Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng is such a leader. She is looking ahead to 2030, the target year for the outcomes of South Africa's National Development Programme. In this way she is serving not only the University of Cape Town, but also South Africa, by bringing the institution into a position where we can more effectively serve the country.

The vision that Professor Phakeng describes in this publication builds on the idea that every individual contributes something of value to UCT – whether it is in the realm of academia and research, or in the many different departments that perform the necessary tasks to support the academic project. This vision relies on every person to do their best and to respect the efforts of others to do the same. It is a call to work

together to achieve a transformed university that will not only respond to the future but also help lead it.

Above all else, Professor Phakeng's vision is a reminder that UCT is not just an institution; it is a community. Like South Africa, UCT is built on diversity: different backgrounds, different customs, different sexual orientations, different mother tongues – each of us depending on the others to work for the common good. This is a strength that we all need to learn. Transformation can take root when we give each other credit for being excellent, celebrating our differences instead of seeing them as obstacles.

**GRAÇA MACHEL**

Chancellor  
University of Cape Town





"WE WANT TO SAY TO THEM: WE GIVE YOU THE SPACE TO COME HERE AND SHAPE IT INTO BEING THE BEST UNIVERSITY IN THE WORLD ... BY BEING WHO YOU ARE, NOT NECESSARILY BY ASSIMILATING. BECAUSE IT'S THE DIVERSITY THAT WE BRING THAT'S GOING TO MAKE OUR UNIVERSITY THE BEST IN THE WORLD."





## WHO WE ARE

The University of Cape Town is a multicultural, multinational community of around 5 000 academic and professional, administrative support and service staff, and approximately 29 000 students who come from over 100 countries across the globe. Offering degrees in six faculties – Commerce, Engineering & the Built Environment, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law and Science – UCT sees around 7 200 students graduate year on year.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng took over leadership of the institution on 1 July 2018 and leads an executive team – the Leadership Lekgotla – which is responsible for the leadership and management of the university as a whole, including the implementation of its strategic goals and objectives.

UCT continues to grow as an internationally connected and relevant institution, advancing the distinctiveness of our own African scholarship by attracting students and academics from all over the world to experience what the top university on the continent has to offer.





Professor Tshildzi Marwala, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg, presented his research at the 2018 Vice-Chancellor's Open Lecture.

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## VISION

The University of Cape Town is in a season of change. It is clear that our students, staff members, alumni and donors are ready for a more inclusive institution to emerge, an institution that speaks more directly to their lived realities. We want to see an institution that is more representative of the country we live in, and for students and staff to see their cultures, values, heritage and knowledge systems reflected here in everything they do.

As a result, the wider university community has been reflecting on what we are doing, how we can work together more compassionately, and what UCT's purpose really is.

2018 marked the sixth year of the July School, an annual collaboration between UCT and the London School of Economics.







Our constant dedication to the academic project is the cornerstone of our work at UCT. We are a diverse community making a contribution to this institution, the people who belong to it and its future. And as we all contribute, we all benefit – in our personal growth, in our careers and as a university community.

We constantly ask the question, “How can we continue to maintain our high standards and make a lasting, sustainable impact in higher education and in wider society?” This is the question that drives our vision and informs all we do. It is in our collective efforts that this vision will be achieved.

The vision is supported by three pillars that are the very foundations of the academic project: excellence, transformation and sustainability.





At the inaugural UCT Annual Awards more than 400 staff members from across UCT came together to celebrate excellence at the university.





# EXCELLENCE

Excellence is the key trademark that should be visible in all UCT endeavours. It must be the guiding principle in all we do. We constantly interrogate what constitutes excellence – where it can be found, who can deliver it and how we can all make a contribution towards achieving it.

Research has long been the cornerstone of excellence at UCT, and we want our researchers to keep contributing to local and global knowledge, but we also recognise that excellence does not rest in the university's research endeavours and academic successes alone. It is also present in our professional, administrative support and service staff.

We recognise that excellence exists across the full diversity of our multilingual and multicultural campus and in society. This is why we realise the need to draw on the entire pool of resources available to us – across all genders, cultures, histories and perspectives.

We strive for sustainable excellence in the long run. This requires that it reaches across all UCT activities: our research; our teaching and learning; the impact we have on communities; the work of our professional, administrative support and service departments; across the UCT plant and in all our operations.

We challenge one another to seek, instil and celebrate excellence in everything we do – in the way we engage with one another, in the way we reach out to the communities surrounding us, in the way we build the UCT community. Such excellence will be a wonderful achievement, but it is only possible if we recognise that the potential for excellence lies in each one of us, that it is not the domain of a few.

Opening ourselves to learning, teaching, researching and operating in a deeper pool of inclusivity will pay dividends that will contribute to authentic and sustainable excellence. This is transformative in its very nature.

# TRANSFORMATION

UCT's flagship African ensemble, *Ibuyambo*, performed *Jalolo* at the annual Vice-Chancellor's Concert.

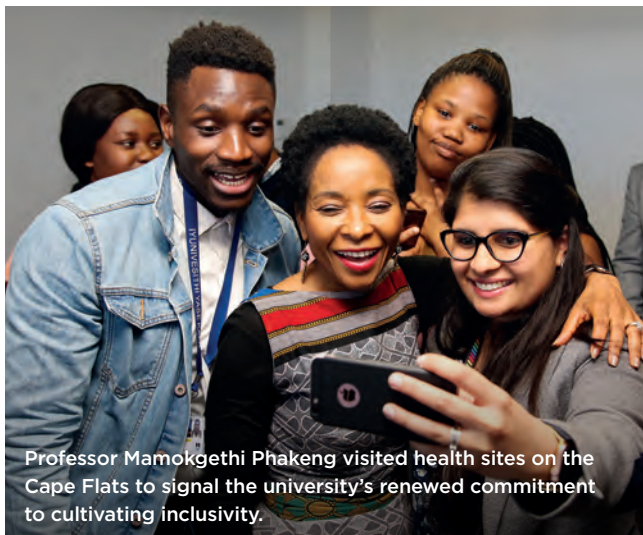
At its core, the transformation we strive for is characterised by excellence. Without this excellence, transformation has no integrity. Equally, the sustainable excellence we strive for is enabled and enriched by transformation. Excellence without transformation at its heart will always be called into question.

Transformation characterised by integrity recognises that everyone has the potential to transform and to be excellent. It recognises that as we ensure access from across society, we also strive to ensure opportunities for students and staff to participate fully and have a tangible impact on our world, for all to contribute to shaping new perspectives and creating our joint futures.

Such transformation is enriching, meaningful, sustainable, filled with promise and will affect and change us all.







Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng visited health sites on the Cape Flats to signal the university's renewed commitment to cultivating inclusivity.

# SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability becomes possible only when transformation and excellence work in tandem.

True sustainability reaches further than simply ensuring financial sustainability. It includes environmental sustainability and strives to build deeper relationships with the UCT stakeholder community to ensure involvement in and commitment to the future of the university.

It asks us to engage with local communities and make a significant difference in the lives of the people who make up our society. It calls on us to influence the educational landscape, to rise to the challenges we face in our country and on our continent, and to influence global matters of education and social justice. We work with the intention of making an impact on individuals that will last a lifetime. We strive to ensure that the impact we make in society will last for generations.

At the heart of our mission is our desire to change lives over time for the better – sustainable, authentic change. This becomes possible when we unlock the full potential of excellence and transformation.

In order to most effectively serve the academic project, it is important that excellence, transformation and sustainability are driven and advanced via strong leadership structures and key leadership roles reaching across the institution.

These roles must rise from multiple spaces and levels across the university. While the members of the Leadership Lekgotla carry ultimate leadership accountability, we recognise that many academics; professional, administrative support and service staff; and students in various positions play critical roles.

Our vision is to appoint excellent staff at UCT, staff who create an enabling environment for other colleagues and our students to thrive in. The intention of each day's work for all our colleagues at UCT must be to strive for excellence in all we do. To enable this, we aim to create specialised leadership roles, and to build academic leadership as a career path, with these leaders becoming the conduits linking academia, administration and management.

We seek to enable leadership across the institution to work creatively in a space that is inspiring and advances transformation and excellence and in turn ensures sustainability for UCT, both as a community and as an institution.

“WE ARE WORKING  
TOGETHER TO MAKE UCT  
A COMMUNITY IN WHICH  
EVERYONE FEELS AT  
HOME AND CAN ACHIEVE  
THEIR POTENTIAL.”

# LEADERSHIP







Deputy vice-chancellors Associate Professor Lis Lange and Professor Loretta Feris celebrate with staff at the UCT Annual Awards.

So, how will we do this?

UCT's future in this ever-changing world will be informed by these three pillars, and through the correct leaders and leadership structures supporting them.

We have proposed specific programmes - to be funded by the Vice-Chancellor's Strategic Fund - to help entrench UCT's leadership in the future. These programmes fall into three categories, namely Future Leaders, Futures Scholarship and Inclusive Futures. They are geared towards 2030 - the target year for the outcomes of South Africa's National Development Programme.



Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng launched three substantial scholarships for women, focused on gender issues, on Women's Day.



"YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY AND ON THE CONTINENT ARE DOING AMAZING THINGS. THOSE ARE OUR FUTURE LEADERS."





Out of the 200 exceptional young people featured on the 2018 Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans list, 51 were UCT students, staff and alumni.



# FUTURE LEADERS

We aim to train a new generation of leaders in all sectors, but with a specific focus on scholarship that will prepare us for the challenges of the future. We want to ensure that our students become leaders in various sectors, and it is through teaching and learning that we can most effectively improve students' success rates, broaden their academic perspectives, stimulate their social awareness and grow them as critical citizens, inculcating the values we would like to see in our society.

This includes a "Leading Scholars" programme that will run until 2030, with a real focus on student leadership and student entrepreneurship. These future leaders are social justice advocates, alive to the challenges in our society; they are active citizens and community leaders who work towards the improvement of our country; they are collaborative young leaders who will remain critical thinkers as they shape the world around them.



The world's first bio-brick made using human urine was unveiled at UCT by researchers from the Department of Civil Engineering.

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## FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP

UCT remains a significant player in addressing the critical challenges of our society. The “Futures Scholarship” initiative will consider the implications of global challenges - such as climate change, technological advancements, the fourth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence and global migration - for universities and for society as a whole.

For this purpose, we have established a “Futures Think Tank” to tackle the key questions about how UCT (and the way we do our work) should change to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.





The 2018 Mini Summer School introduced grade 11 and 12 learners to new subjects and possible study and career choices.

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## INCLUSIVE FUTURES

“Inclusive Futures” focuses on expanding our knowledge and understanding of the environment, social responsiveness, responsible citizenship, decolonisation and gender equality, among other problems facing our society.

To signal UCT’s renewed commitment to cultivating inclusivity on and off campus, we must all focus on the expansion of community and external partnerships. This is where we can really begin to address critical development and social justice issues. This requires the university leadership to be inclusive and creative in approaching their respective portfolios at UCT, and to take responsibility for making a difference in those spheres where they have impact.



## AFTERWORD

The vision presented here affirms the power of every person in the UCT community to help build a better future for the institution. This is a future that is more sustainable because it elevates the good that we can do in our different roles at UCT. It builds on our diversity instead of using it to separate us, and it makes room for creativity and collaboration in addressing our challenges. This vision sees potential in our younger academics and shapes a career path for their future.

The leadership of UCT has heard the call for change in recent years and has responded with a range of projects that are designed to transform the university and make it a real community for everyone who comes here – a place where each individual can see a part of

themselves reflected in the institution's daily life.


But a vision is just that: a vision. To turn it into reality, we need to hear the voices of everyone who has a relationship with UCT – students, staff, donors, sponsors, parents and alumni. We want to join with this wider UCT community in recognising and addressing the problems that face us during this exciting time of change. And we want to build partnerships with you that ensure this university achieves the goals discussed in this publication: excellence, transformation and sustainability.

**SIPHO M PITYANA**

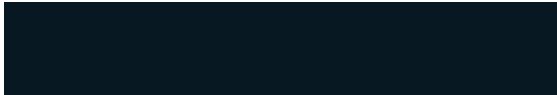
Chair of Council  
University of Cape Town







AS A UNIVERSITY,  
AS RESEARCHERS  
AND TEACHERS, WE CAN  
ALSO GIVE THIS GIFT  
TO THE WORLD: CREATING  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE  
OF US, FOR MORE KINDS  
OF US, TO HAVE A VOICE.



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