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Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price responds to Black Academic Caucus's further allegations

In response to my VC Desk of 28 February 2018, the Black Academic Caucus (BAC) has raised various arguments against the appointment of Associate Professor Lis Lange as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Teaching & Learning. I write again to respond to the new points they raised.

1. The BAC states that "Senate did not deliberate on the black candidate in question, Professor Elelwani Ramugondo, who was deemed 'unappointable' by the selection committee. What is not mentioned here is that the Senate rejected the decision of the selection committee to appoint Associate Professor Lis Lange."

This statement implies that the University of Cape Town did not follow correct procedure in response to the lack of a two-thirds majority vote in favour of the selection committee's decision. In fact, correct procedure was followed and the BAC's statement does not provide the full picture.

As required, a delegation of Senate met with the selection committee to voice arguments both in favour of the committee's decision and against it. The selection committee took these opposing arguments into account and on reflection, committee members determined that they had made the correct decision in recommending the appointment of Associate Professor Lange. In presenting its recommendation to Council – the only body that has the authority to make an appointment for DVC – the committee also presented the vote by Senate and the arguments presented by the Senate delegation. The Institutional Forum confirmed that correct procedure had been followed in this matter.

2. The BAC complains that there was no livestreaming of the candidate presentations" as is customary".

The fact is that livestreaming of the candidates' presentations was not a requirement in the selection process. While livestreaming has been used in some previous candidate presentations (especially when representatives of stakeholder groups have not all been

able to attend the presentation in person), it is not currently a requirement. However, an audio recording was made of the presentations and this was made available to stakeholders, including the Chair of the BAC. Furthermore, it is not clear why the absence of livestreaming should have affected the outcome since all candidates were treated equally in this regard.

3. The BAC complains about a recomposition of the selection committee which resulted in four black members being replaced with four white members.

The decision to replace committee members was made by the stakeholder groups they were representing; each group appointed a representative to be on the committee. The new composition left the committee with about half black, and half white members.

4. The BAC says: "The same constituencies represented in the selection committee, ratified the process as part of the Institutional Forum. It appears in effect, that constituencies are allowed to serve as both player and referee."

This is not true. No more than two or three selection committee members sit on the Institutional Forum, which has about 30 members.

5. The BAC says: "Although Max Price states that there is no requirement that the applicant should be eligible for full professorship at UCT, the Chair of Council – Mr Sipho Pityana - in a letter to Professor Ramugondo in December 2017, states that one of the reasons for her 'unappointability' was due to the fact that she was not yet Full Professor – an attribute that would have made her acceptable among her peers. At the time Associate Professor Ramugondo was already awarded full professorship. Furthermore, Professor Ramugondo fulfilled the criteria listed for the position. Lis Lange, on the other hand, was awarded associate professorship by a committee of UCT subsequent to her appointment."

The BAC appears to believe that the selection committee's decision on the appointability of candidates for the position of DVC relied on the candidates' title as Professor. This is not the case: professorship was not a condition of appointability. The selection committee took careful, holistic consideration of the scope and depth of each candidate's active leadership experience; years of involvement in a position of authority in the higher education sector, especially with regards to teaching and learning; and overall suitability for the demands of such a position at UCT. Only one candidate demonstrated this suitability.

6. The BAC says: "The issue of transformation raised by BAC is that it is the onus of the selection committee to demonstrate that the gap between an equity candidate and non-equity candidates is so large that it legitimizes the appointment of the latter. This was not done in this case."

The principle of selecting a black candidate over a white candidate, using race as the criterion, assumes that both candidates bring broadly the same benefits to the appointment. This was not the case in this appointment. Only one candidate was

considered appointable. The BAC's argument also assumes that a white person cannot drive a transformation agenda. We reject this view and in this particular case, Associate Professor Lange has years of experience in transformation in other universities and across the sector as a whole.

Sincerely

Dr Max Price
Vice-Chancellor