



# VISION 2030

UNLEASH HUMAN POTENTIAL  
TO CREATE A FAIR AND JUST SOCIETY

# FOREWORD

When we set out to develop Vision 2030 for the University of Cape Town (UCT), the only element that was clear was that we could not use the typical approach to developing strategies for universities. Vision 2030 could not be a document that would end up lost at the bottom of a website or forgotten in a drawer. We wanted Vision 2030 to respond to the challenge put to us by the vice-chancellor: to shape and lead change. With some trepidation we started the development of a living strategy: an idea that is constantly reshaped in different parts of the organisation and that elicits an emotional and intellectual commitment across all sectors of our community. We thank the vice-chancellor for constantly pushing us to think differently. This draft is now ready for the broader UCT community to engage with our living strategy.

We struggled with the notion that our massive transformative purpose should not be the same as the vision and mission of conventional strategies. Rather it is the aspirational dream that makes us come to work every day and to which we give our boundless energy. We are pleased to note that in the consultative sessions that we have been able to hold up to now, UCT's massive transformative purpose has elicited not just support, but the UCT community has responded with enthusiasm and a sense of hope and inspiration of our future possibilities.

From the very beginning we wanted to bring all the members and groups of the university together. In particular we wanted to bridge the conceptual

separation between support and academic functions and ensure that our capabilities and management systems needed to make the vision real were not an afterthought. With this idea of a new integrated and collaborative UCT in mind, we created cross-functional task teams in which academic core functions and the cross-cutting professional, administrative and support functions were fully represented in all discussions.

As "university people" we had to overcome our biases towards what we could learn from the business sector. We wrestled with new fads and old conservatism. We wondered about what "outside" people could offer in helping us think about what our university could look like and feel like in the future. We are very grateful to the members of the Futures Think Tank, who dared to start the dream that helped clear the way for new conversations to begin in our various cross-functional teams.

What is before you is a draft document to be improved, changed and perfected, underpinning a vision that we will work towards being experienced, embraced by all and which will take UCT into a positive future. It is the fruit of the deep commitment to UCT of close on a hundred people. We trust that in the next phase of engagement and co-creation this number will grow to include the majority of our people in the university.

We are proud of having been part of the journey up to now.

**Vision 2030 Planning Team**





# VICE-CHANCELLOR'S INTRODUCTION

The vice-chancellor's introduction will be completed and finalised after the important engagements with the UCT community. Engagements with staff and students will roll out following the UCT Council meeting of 20 June 2020.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE ROAD WE HAVE TRAVELLED

In July 2018 UCT's newly appointed vice-chancellor, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, introduced her vision for the university and adopted a future orientation to drive the thinking behind the development of a new strategic plan. Professor Phakeng presented the three pillars that, for her, represented the foundation of the academic project at UCT – excellence, transformation and sustainability – and challenged the university to imagine what a successful and thriving UCT would look like in 2030.

The approach in developing UCT's Strategic Planning Framework 2016–2020 was greatly influenced by the student protests of 2015 and 2016 and took its cue from the areas where the least progress had been made in relation to the objectives of the previous strategic plan.

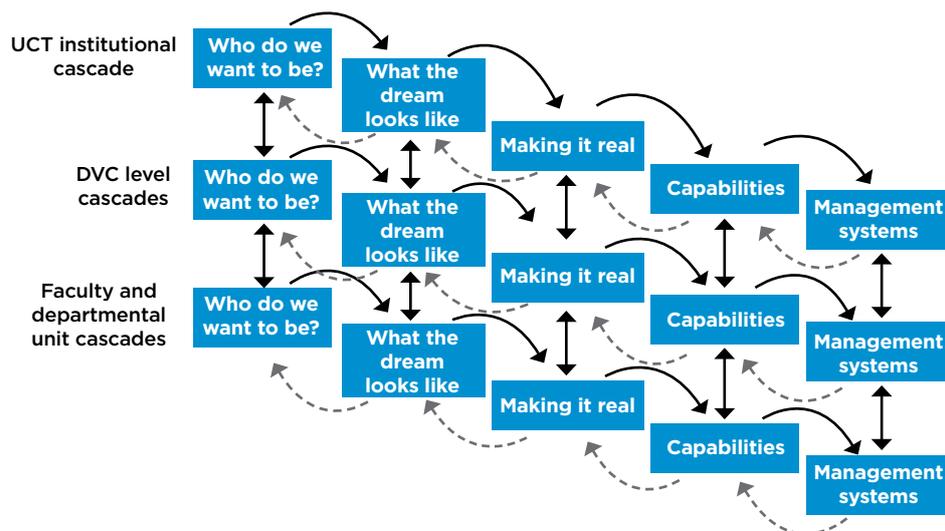
Vision 2030 presented an opportunity to be more forward looking and to take a different approach to strategic planning. Having considered a number of alternatives, a hybrid approach was adopted, based largely on Roger Martin's book *Playing to Win: How strategy really works*, led by Professor Kosheek Sewchurran of UCT's Graduate School of

Business and informed by the work already done by the Futures Think Tank, led by the dean of the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment, Professor Alison Lewis, and facilitated by Abbas Jamie.

Martin's approach to strategy is popular in business and we translated it to suit UCT as an organisation. From this perspective, a strategy is an integrated set of choices that uniquely positions an organisation in its industry so it can create sustainable advantage and superior value relative to the competition. We were especially interested in working with the notion of an integrated set of choices and of creating sustainable advantage. What is unique about what UCT can offer that will sustain the value of the university into the future?

The fundamental approach to the development of the strategy is based on the cascading down of strategic choices, from the institutional level to the implementation units. In practical terms, this implied thinking strategically about UCT in relation to the core functions – teaching and learning, and research; in relation to the six faculties and their departments; and in relation to the different departments that provide





**Figure 2: Cascades of choice from Roger Martin’s Playing to Win adapted for UCT**

professional and support services for the university. In doing this, transformation and social engagement were regarded as the cross-cutting elements of our ethos that must be present in all strategic choices at all levels for them to be effective.

The responsibility for driving the development of Vision 2030 has been allocated by the vice-chancellor to Deputy Vice-Chancellor Associate Professor Lis Lange and Chief Operating Officer Dr Reno Morar. The approach taken is based on two principles – strategic integration and buy-in from UCT. In order to make this effective, the following structures have been set up:

- Vision 2030 Planning Team
- Cross Functional Task Team (Vision 2030 Planning Team and representatives from the deans and executive directors)
- Extended Task Team (Cross Functional Task Team and strategic invitees, including academics, students and key portfolio holders)
- two Cross Functional Working Groups (Teaching and Learning, and Research) that take responsibility for translating the institutional-level strategic decisions to the core functions. (See sections 4 and 5.)

The first draft of Vision 2030 was produced by the Extended Task Team for internal engagement. This version was reworked and refined collectively to create a document that was presented to the UCT Council in October 2019.

Using the Council’s endorsement and comments, another draft of Vision 2030 was produced, which was presented to the Research and Teaching and Learning working groups for the finalisation of the respective core function cascades.

The plan for March and April this year was to present Vision 2030 to the university community and hold formal feedback sessions with every organisational unit, providing opportunity for additional qualitative engagements.

When lockdown measures put in place by the government to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic came into effect, the majority of these engagements had to be cancelled. Key stakeholder meetings that had already taken place provided useful input into the strategic planning process, building an understanding of the perspectives of the wide diversity of staff and their varied experiences of the university. The university executive wants to achieve a common vision for the university to which all staff can relate, thus the strategy as a document needs to be accessible to all. We are currently working on ways to engage different sectors of the university under lockdown conditions in order to ensure maximum endorsement.

This unplanned situation means that the UCT community has not sufficiently engaged with the content of the document. This process will have to continue after the current UCT Council meets and hopefully gives its endorsement to Vision 2030.

## CHAPTER 2

# TAKING STOCK AND MOVING FORWARD

UCT is one of the oldest universities in South Africa. Over the years, it has achieved an international reputation as a research-intensive university. It offers a wide range of professional and formative degrees at the undergraduate level, as well as postgraduate studies up to doctoral level.

Like most English-speaking colonial universities in South Africa, UCT has a contradictory history. Moulded on the western tradition of university excellence over its existence, UCT has struggled with its own identity, culture and position in society. While under apartheid it stood for academic freedom and its right to teach all students, this position was not always consistent when it came to black academic staff and campus segregation. UCT's political resistance to apartheid, as imperfect as it was, constituted an important base to start the process of deracialising and transforming the university. This process was accelerated for the whole country with the 1994 democratic elections and UCT was no exception. The focus and nature of transformation at UCT, however, came under critical scrutiny during 2015–2017. This forced the university to engage critically with its colonial history, its current identity, its culture, its relationship to society and its location in Afrika.

Chinua Achebe, the prominent Nigerian novelist said, "There is that great proverb — that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter." UCT's choice to spell Afrika in its pre-colonial spelling is an invitation to reclaim Afrika's agency and use it to validate the global character of the local in the 21st century. It is in this context that UCT chooses to be a global university in Afrika.

In the last two decades, the world has changed in ways that obliged universities to rethink their purpose and location in society if they did not want to become obsolete. Climate change, growing inequality, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, population displacement, and now a global pandemic accompanied by a deep economic crisis are elements of our world that force us into a new type of consciousness. UCT needs to engage with these matters in their local manifestations and global implications. Into the 21st century and in light of the critique of the last few years, we need to rethink who we are, what do we do, how do we do it and who benefits from our work.

While UCT performs very well by most teaching and research indicators, the current model of the university is not sufficiently responsive to the needs of a new generation of diverse students and academics eager to respond to the world's challenges. Despite its location in Afrika, UCT's Afrikan roots are not sufficiently valued and foregrounded in its global performance as a research university or in its curriculum. UCT has greater potential to innovate in teaching, research and social engagement than it is currently doing. The COVID-19 crisis has shown UCT's capacity to lead with innovative responses and imagination.

In this context, UCT took a bold step when it decided to lead and shape the future instead of choosing to react and follow. The new vice-chancellor, Professor Phakeng, set up a Futures Think Tank under this banner, thus creating the space for daring the university to realise its potential to be a trailblazer and a thought leader. The work of the Futures Think Tank helped UCT to come up with a purpose

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for its work that functions simultaneously as an aspiration and as the beginning of the road map to change. What we call a massive transformative purpose is the idea that inspires the whole UCT community to be the best we can be.

As a university, UCT by definition has two fundamental responsibilities – to cultivate and nurture the capabilities of the younger generation for them to become leaders in different spheres of life, and to provide the conditions for academics to produce research that broadens our understanding of the social and natural worlds and the relationship between them. Taking this as a point of departure, and the inalienable purpose of the university, we decided to elevate our mission to embrace the world and thus choose as our purpose “Unleash human potential to create a fair and just society”.

This purpose is an affirmation of the inherent creativity of humanity, as well as a recognition that the state of the world (social and natural) needs changing. Life is not fair, just or sustainable unless we are capable of changing important aspects of what we think and what we do. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we had focused on inequality, climate change, waste and the circular economy, sustainable livelihoods, urbanisation, transport and mobility, disease, public health, and the role of technology and data in society as some of the core areas that need research in order to produce a new understanding. As the pandemic moves through the world, we see these areas become even more visible and urgent. We believe that the current crisis we find ourselves in today makes the focus of this vision ever more relevant. The rest of this document invites you to our journey to Vision 2030.



# CHAPTER 3

# VISION 2030

# FOR UCT

## 3.1 WHO DO WE WANT TO BE?

Our dream is to draw from the extraordinary social and cultural diversity, creativity and capacity for innovation of all our staff and students to contribute to making the 21st century the Afrikan century; to look at ourselves as a university and create together the top global university in Afrika – a university that is uncompromising in its transformative intent, deeply rooted in academic excellence and that strives for social, environmental and financial sustainability.

We will call on our staff and students to work together in education and research, to have real impact on our ability to tackle societies' problems and to effect positive change in the world.

## 3.2 WHAT THE DREAM LOOKS LIKE

UCT will continue to **attract students with exceptional potential from our country, our continent and our world.**

Located in the Western Cape, UCT draws students from the rest of South Africa and 135 other countries in Afrika and the rest of the world. This diversity provides an extraordinary opportunity to develop a culture of inclusivity, collaboration and dialogue in the manner in which we educate undergraduate and postgraduate students. UCT will work to ensure that all the members of its community have a voice and a real sense of their agency and value for the university.

In line with its purpose, UCT will **offer a transformative and socially engaged undergraduate and postgraduate education**, enabling our graduates to use their knowledge, skills and sense of

responsibility to shape and to be at the service of society locally and globally.

In line with the growing importance of technology in society and its impact on the manner in which the new generations learn, UCT will provide **both contact and digitally mediated education** framed by sound pedagogy aimed at developing creativity, analytical thinking, complex problem-solving abilities, collaboration and social responsibility across disciplines and fields of study.

UCT already offers a wide range of short courses that fill the needs of graduates for continuous education. **UCT will expand its capacity to offer continuous education and micro-credentials**, to respond to the changing needs of the world of work and the emergence of new jobs.

Persistent world hunger, poverty and inequality, climate change and health crises are just some of the complex social and environmental issues that, if not addressed, will exacerbate current societal and economic inequalities into the future. UCT will **produce research that answers the complex problems of today and tomorrow**. To do this, it will advance inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary research approaches so as to better understand the past and define and tackle current and future problems.

Finally, in support of building a fair and just society, UCT will strengthen its scholarly ability to work collaboratively with local and international social actors. As a university, UCT is well placed to lead conversations with government, industry and other role players in the pursuit of new knowledge that will contribute towards our massive transformative purpose.



### 3.3 MAKING IT REAL

We will offer **holistic, innovative, future-oriented education at undergraduate and postgraduate level**. UCT not only produces graduates for the labour market but educates thinkers who are capable of shaping, adapting to and responding to the unknown – global citizens who are actively responsible for the world they have inherited and will leave a better world for future generations.

Our success in this area will depend on our ability to ensure that academics are trained higher education teachers, the introduction of transformative pedagogies in the classroom environment, the ability to renew the curriculum and provide the necessary infrastructure for teacher and students to learn together, the resources and networks to provide real work experience as part of the degree, and administrative and student support systems that contribute to a seamless student experience.

As a top research university in Afrika, UCT is well placed with unique

opportunities found in our continent to find innovative ways of doing things. We will focus on research that highlights these unique opportunities and solve problems that matter, on the understanding that Afrika's problems are the problems of the world and we are in a privileged position to contribute to this enterprise. To do this, we must ensure that we continue to expand our local and international partnerships, improve the diversity and functionality of our interdisciplinary research teams, and develop and maintain state-of-the-art research management and support systems and facilities.

UCT will distinguish itself by providing **thought leadership on social justice**. The lens through which we look at the world should be that of the collective public intellectual, participating in and influencing the public debate. In order to achieve this, UCT will put in place communication platforms to make our teaching and learning and research enterprises visible and accessible; policies and frameworks



that enable, support and recognise civic engagement by staff and students; and bold policies and practices that support equity and cultural transformation.

Finally, UCT will be an employer of choice because it develops and fosters an organisational ethos that supports new ways of thinking, being and doing. The view of a fairer society will start with how UCT functions as an organisation. In order to support this vision, we need to foster an organisational culture that incentivises innovation and creativity, and we need to galvanise staff and students into action to develop and maintain a sustainable campus. This will be supported by policies, systems and change management that focus on environmental, social and financial sustainability. The whole UCT community together will strive for resilience, sustainability and transformation.

All of this will find its home on a campus that provides and uses its existing physical infrastructure in an innovative manner,

suitable for the service of the 21st century and beyond. We will find space for inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary teams to work, and explore ways that we can teach and learn and undertake research from our own environment.

In this section of Vision 2030 we have presented UCT's strategic choices at institutional level. This is our collective commitment that will be required to work towards a UCT that unleashes human potential to create a fair and just society. In the next two sections we present how the integrative approach works in relation to the traditional core functions of the university – teaching and learning, and research. We also applied the approach of bringing together core functions and cross-cutting areas to the development of strategic choices in teaching and learning, and research. Each working group was built around the core functions but had memberships from cross-cutting areas in transformation and social engagement and the support and professional services.



# CHAPTER 4

# TEACHING AND LEARNING

## 4.1 WHO DO WE WANT TO BE?

Taking as our departure UCT's purpose to unleash human potential to create a fair and just society, the Teaching and Learning portfolio will work to "Unleash students' potential through education to be resilient agents of change for themselves and in society".

## 4.2 WHAT THE DREAM LOOKS LIKE

To be the top global university in Afrika in the area of teaching and learning, UCT needs to make contextually relevant choices that explain what we do, where we do it and how we do it.

The type of education offered by Vision 2030 is framed by the question of what kind of graduates are needed in the 21st century. To answer this question, we take into account the needs of our students, the changes in the different knowledge fields, and the broader expectations in the

social functioning of university graduates in a plural society. It covers aspects such as the curriculum, student engagement, modes of delivery and, very importantly, the pedagogies we employ.

In relation to the curriculum, we have a dual focus:

- to **offer innovative curricula at the cutting edge of disciplines and professions** to enable our students to use and to develop the latest technologies, knowledge and skills to enter and contribute to different knowledge fields, the workplace and civil society of the 21st century
- to **offer a socially engaged curriculum** that balances the local and the global to enable our students to have ready access to the skills and knowledge required to exercise their sense of social citizenship in the creation of a sustainable and regenerative world. Students' experiences of their learning process are a key element to their success.

UNLEASH STUDENTS' POTENTIAL THROUGH EDUCATION TO BE RESILIENT AGENTS OF CHANGE FOR THEMSELVES AND IN SOCIETY



We need to offer the type of learning environment that **facilitates students' engagement with their own learning** to allow them to express their agency and contribute to the curriculum.

The current generation of students and staff interact with digital media as part of their educational experience. Yet, in the context of our response to COVID-19, we have seen that this can also accentuate social inequality and exclusion. UCT will ensure increased network connectivity and access to mobile devices for students and staff in order to offer democratically **appropriate, digitally enabled education at undergraduate, postgraduate and continuous education levels**. This will allow us to expose our students to the latest learning technologies in an appropriate environment without sacrificing equity or student engagement with their teachers and peers.

Our teachers need to be self-reflective on the effectiveness of their teaching practices and to recognise, include and respect the contribution of students to their classes. In order to do this, we will **continually renew and transform our pedagogies**.

#### 4.3 MAKING IT REAL

UCT will provide education across the disciplines and professions that focuses on developing **graduate attributes targeted at the self, the community and the world**. In relation to the self, we will teach our students skills to develop emotional intelligence, creativity and critical thinking, complex problem-solving, judgement and decision-making, and cognitive flexibility. In relation to the community, we will work with our students to cultivate their ability to manage people, to coordinate with others, to be service orientated and to be able to negotiate.

Finally, in relation to the world, UCT students will be provided with opportunities to develop a sense of Afrikan citizenship and global citizenship, responsibility towards the natural

environment, and a strong valorisation of cultural diversity. We see our students developing a specific set of skills, qualities and perspectives that will cultivate their knowledge and intellect, as well as their responsibilities towards the community and the broader world.

In their journey, UCT students will be exposed to different learning approaches, **infusing environmental education, design thinking and interdisciplinary education in their studies**. These methods will allow students to develop approaches to engaging with the world in a more holistic way and understand their own actions, abilities and behaviour in relation to others.

By **providing a problem-based education that takes place both at the university and the workplace**, our students will be taught to understand problems as opportunities and challenges and will encounter real-world issues within a supportive environment that stresses the importance of the educational process.

While our students have exceptional potential, we must commit to our role in unleashing that potential. This can only be done if we acknowledge and encourage our students to embrace the very different environments and experiences from which they come and to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired to make the most of their opportunities. To **support their success and excellence**, we will offer well-developed student and academic support systems. We will leverage and harness our data analytics capabilities to provide relevant information to the students, to their lecturers and tutors and to our support departments in order to sustain the development of the whole person.

All of this will take place in an organisational context in which physical infrastructure will be at the service of 21st-century education; planning frameworks will be designed to ensure that our educational values remain fundamental to our disciplines, programmes and curricula; and we will provide support for the development of our staff as university teachers.

# CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH

## 5.1 WHO DO WE WANT TO BE?

As the top research university in Afrika, and guided by UCT's purpose to unleash human potential to create a fair and just society, UCT's research portfolio will work to "Unleash knowledge in and from Afrika to redefine and co-create a sustainable global future".

## 5.2 WHAT THE DREAM LOOKS LIKE

To be the top global research university in Afrika recognised for its excellence and relevance, UCT researchers need to make choices around the kind of research we want to do, where to focus and how we do it.

Through its focus on Afrika and its positioning in the world, UCT's research will enhance quality of life in South Africa and on the rest of the continent with an expanding impact globally. To do this, UCT will build on its globally recognised expertise in natural and social science disciplines, as well as in the humanities. As the top research university in Afrika,

UCT will move with ease between research focused on the building of new fundamental knowledge for the present and the future and its targeted application for impact. We will value the role of cutting-edge next-generation knowledge. We will focus on solving complex problems and realising new opportunities within the social and natural worlds by working collaboratively and democratically and using inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary approaches.

UCT will attract top academics from South Africa, the rest of Afrika and the broader global community. The diversity of our staff, postdoctoral fellows and postgraduate students, and the integrated relationship between teaching, learning and research, will put UCT at the global cutting edge of both research and postgraduate education rooted in Afrika.

## 5.3 MAKING IT REAL

UCT will continue to build its research agenda on its existing strengths and areas

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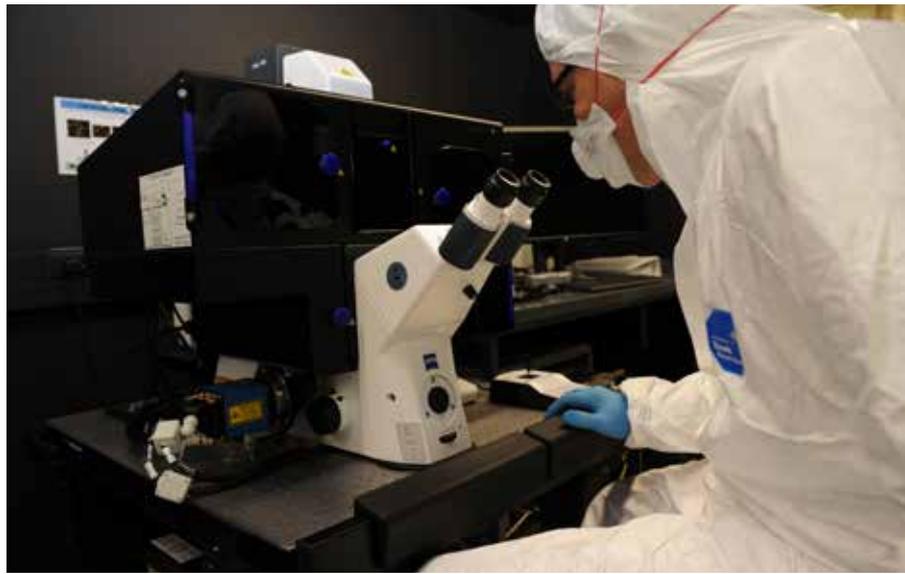


of expertise and its capacity to nurture new areas of strength selected to meet strategic priorities. We will actively focus on critical areas of impact in Afrika, for example, climate change, biodiversity, urbanisation, migration, diseases of the poor, natural resource governance and efficiency. We will extend our Afrika-focused knowledge to a broader global reach. We will also bring an Afrikan perspective to concepts brought in from the global stage, for example, artificial intelligence and autonomous transport, and extend these for Afrika's impact and benefit while ensuring local relevance and thought leadership. We will focus on the recruitment of staff with a high level of expertise in key research areas.

In the construction of this new research agenda, UCT will intensify its global interface with other universities and research centres by leveraging our participation in international and Afrikan partnerships, often leveraging these jointly.

Conscious of the priority and benefit of broadening our sources of knowledge and ways of thinking and doing, we will expand our orientation to embrace local knowledge and expertise and to position it effectively on the global knowledge stage. UCT will forge strong social partnerships with local communities, civil society, business and local and national governments to shape its research agenda. In so doing, this research agenda will balance the aspirations of UCT's researchers, its funders and the society in which it functions.

UCT will build the technical and cultural infrastructure to develop strong collaborations that operate both digitally and face to face, as well as modes of thinking and doing research that balance the aspirations and needs of the university, the researchers, the funders and broader society. UCT's research infrastructure will create the organisational and material conditions to support its research excellence and relevance. Development of inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary research projects and postgraduate programmes, grounded on strong disciplines, will grow



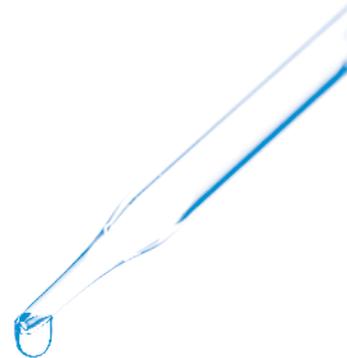
through the provision of an environment that facilitates exchange of ideas, concepts, approaches, knowledge and data.

Finally, UCT will take the lead in the development of the next generation of researchers, scholars and beneficial leaders for the country and the rest of the Afrikan continent.

To achieve all of this, UCT will provide an integrated, responsive and well-governed infrastructure and enterprise to support research, including ethic compliance infrastructure; cutting edge online platforms to sustain virtual research collaborations; and relevant and accessible information resources, cross-institutional capabilities and infrastructure to support the shared management and use of data.

UCT will focus on the impact of its research and the extent of its social responsiveness and will increase its ability to communicate research results and research impact publicly.

As a cutting-edge hub for postgraduate education in Afrika, UCT will offer intense training for supervisors on the understanding that supervision is a form of teaching that needs to be developed. Further postgraduate education and early-career researchers will be supported through a strong researcher development academy.



# CONCLUDING REMARKS

To support this dream and make it sustainable, UCT needs to take a number of important steps.

First, it needs to continue to engage with the university community to elicit active participation in the new vision.

Second, it will require that the institutional and core function cascades are further translated downstream, creating an integrated dialogue across faculties, academic departments, support and professional services and general administration.

Third, from an organisational point of view, UCT will need to learn to hold together ambivalence and complexity.

Fourth, to be able to manage the complexity of our enterprise, we will need to develop 21st-century systems in the core functions, as well as in the administrative backbone of the university, from IT to finance and human resources.

Fifth, UCT will have to make fundamental

decisions about where to allocate resources to make this vision sustainable.

A vision such as this will require a different approach to the UCT budget and the development of new and innovative ways to finance different elements of the strategy. We are looking forward to working with the UCT Council in achieving this.

In terms of the next immediate steps, this document needs to be endorsed and signed off by the current UCT Council. Subsequently, we will initiate a carefully planned new round of engagements with different stakeholders, taking into account the constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, that will culminate in the formal presentation of Vision 2030 to the UCT Senate and the Institutional Forum. With their approval, we will submit this document to the newly constituted UCT Council for final sign off in the second half of 2020. The development of implementation plans will follow this.

