

# VC's Voice

December 2018

## A Year of Gearing Up

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Our society remains profoundly unequal with high levels of poverty and unemployment, as well as various forms of exclusion. We are therefore deliberate about our focus as an engaged university that seeks to work alongside communities to find solutions to the challenges they face.

To this end, our teaching and learning, and research and innovation is focused on areas that can contribute new and innovative approaches and solutions to the many seemingly intractable issues faced by society.

This has been a year of gearing up, of putting in place everything we need in order to advance our work and enable us to deliver on our promises, as outlined in the inaugural address, and as articulated to us by university stakeholders during the 2018 Listening Campaign.

Many of you shared with us how much more can be achieved by us all through re-imagining various aspects of how we run, manage and lead the university. Over the last couple of months we have been occupied with this; putting in place plans to review our organisational design and processes, including institutional committees and systems, and working at addressing key issues pertaining to the academic mission, as outlined by colleagues, particularly academics, who talked to us during the Listening Campaign and through other engagement channels.

Our students are at the centre of our work, and it is extremely important to us that we innovate and find better ways together, in consultation with our students, to improve the conditions in which they live and learn. This year saw the launch of the inaugural Youth Leadership Convention, where students from Mandela University and other universities nationally, got together.

They participated in debates with leading scholars and thought leaders on issues, including youth unemployment, entrepreneurship, the performance of the economy, good governance and citizenship. Various interventions have been conceptualised to enable our students to becoming responsible citizens who constructively engage in improving the university and society at large.

Our students are active members of a number of fora and structures in our university, such as the student access and success innovations, safety and security interventions, the work that we do to address gender-based violence, student indigence and hunger, and many other initiatives. This is significant for us, as more than 60% of our students are from poor and working class communities. Their voice and agency is important to us, and we are putting in considerable effort to ensure that they are fully integrated into university life.

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Staff retiring from Nelson Mandela University join Vice-Chancellor Professor Sibongile Muthwa at the new Mandela bench.

# CriSHET a driving force for change

*Transformation in South Africa generally, and higher education in particular, has progressed at a painfully slow pace. To address this, Nelson Mandela University has, for the last decade, been hard at work deepening transformation at the institution through various initiatives.*

*This work provided impetus for the establishment of the Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET), to which transformation and social justice specialist Professor André Keet, pictured right, was appointed. The launch this year formed part of the university's Centenary Celebration Programme.*

CriSHET is a strategic post introduced to drive the transformation agenda of the university by grounding it in critical studies and framing it within the concept of an African-purposed curriculum in view of the current decolonisation debates. This includes being a strategic resource to various key stakeholders, internally and externally, and to support the leadership team.

Prof Keet is a leading figure in studying, implementing and guiding transformation within Higher Education and brings to the CriSHET Chair a wealth of experience. "Having collaborated in the Mandela University space for the past five years as an associate, I found the conditions here for building the scholarly base of transformation work to be the most fertile of any of the universities I have encountered," says Prof Keet.



"People here have been working very hard over the past 10 years at deep transformation in the university space; and the idea and commitment to a transformative university is most pronounced."

Mandela University put forward the Chair as a key response to higher education transformation and decolonisation, and to provide the Chair with the flexibility to do its work as a key implementing agent.

"This requires a disciplinary base from which we can study universities as social institutions and how they can meaningfully transform, based on scholarly research and associated programmes," says Prof Keet.

For more information about the CriSHET and the team, please visit [www.crishet.mandela.ac.za](http://www.crishet.mandela.ac.za).

## Plans put in place to enable delivery of promises

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During 2018 we accomplished a great deal as a university. We completed the re-integration of previously outsourced services; we launched the Centenary programme to commemorate 100 years of Mandela's life; we launched the Chair in Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation; got approval to launch the long-anticipated Centre for Gender Studies, and several other Chairs and Centres in the Humanities. We have also made huge strides towards the establishment of the country's tenth Medical School. Over and above this, a great deal of leading edge work has been achieved by faculties and entities throughout our university.

With 2019 almost upon us, we feel ready and poised to continue on a decisive path of delivering on our collective commitments and agreements. Key to our work next year will be the following goals, among others, to:

- Further strategically position our identity, ethos and posture as Nelson Mandela University;
- Continue to work on our strategic differentiation and the unique propositions of our institution;
- Further advance the quality of our academic offering; and the student and staff experience;
- Continue to consolidate our work on transformation including our work and scholarship on decoloniality and Africanisation, and measures to achieve an inclusive institutional and intellectual culture based on non-racialism and democracy, gender transformation and equality, to name a few;

- Refine the governance model and academic plan of the Ocean Sciences programme;
- Consolidate all our plans to realise the establishment of the Medical School;
- Mainstream and refine the conversation on our engagement scholarship philosophy; and
- Work on a number of key initiatives to ensure the sustainability of our institution, now and into the future.

Our role, as the leadership of the university, remains a sobering, yet noble responsibility. We do realise - and I have no illusions - that we will only achieve success in all we set out to do by leveraging the full asset base of our university, which is our students and our staff. Hence our notion of an authentically-engaged institution remains the mainstay of our mien.

Our own commitment as the team charged with the leadership of the university is to ensure that we invest our energy to enhance institutional solidarity and social cohesion. We need to lead and show up in a manner that portrays the best of what this institution stands for, namely the cultivation of humanity and commitment to advancing the greater good.

I take this opportunity to thank our Council, and our students and staff, for your hard work and dedication to excellence; and to thank our alumni and partners for walking with us during 2018. I sincerely wish all of you a peaceful and restful holiday season with loved ones and family.

**Professor Sibongile Muthwa**  
Vice-Chancellor

# Going global for good

An activist architect who designs beautiful township schools using recycled wooden pallets, glass and plastic bottles. A centre for orphaned and vulnerable children that funds itself with its own on-site micro-enterprises, including a bakery and hair salon.

These are two of the many leading-edge social innovation and community projects in South Africa that will be showcased on a new online global network and digital creativity space called Common Good First. The link is set to go live early next year.

To facilitate this, a Common Good First digital creativity space, the first of its kind in Africa, was launched in October at Nelson Mandela University's Bird Street Campus. It is the first of several to be launched at Common Good First's six partner universities in South Africa, as well as in Scotland, Norway, Iceland and Spain.

"This is such a unique opportunity not only to showcase the social innovation projects, but also to open university spaces to members of the community and take the university into the community to co-create responses to societal issues," says Professor Darelle van Greunen, Director of the Centre for Community Technologies (CCT), which oversaw the digital platform build with support from the University of the Western Cape.

The developer and UK leader and coordinator of the project is Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) in Glasgow, Scotland. Mandela University is the lead South African partner and coordinator. The project is funded by Erasmus +, a European Union (EU) education programme.

Social innovators and community project members have free, walk-in access to ICT tools, internet, devices and training to upload the story of their project, images and short videos.

*Activist architect and PhD fellow Kevin Kimwelle. Kevin's work is featured on the new Common Good First online website.*



The project also facilitates workshops to assist social innovators with digital literacy and video editing, and offers simple, clear instructions to help members to seamlessly tell their stories online.

Port Elizabeth-based activist architect Kevin Kimwelle is participating in the project and spoke at the opening. Currently doing his PhD on localised, socially-innovative and green designs that promote social change, Kimwelle focuses on co-creating beautiful buildings in – and with – communities, using recycled materials such as wooden crates, glass and plastic bottles.

His Silindokuhle Pre-School in Joe Slovo West township, Nelson Mandela Bay metro – built from recycled pallets and bottles – has drawn several accolades, including nomination for 2017 Design Indaba MBOISA (Most Beautiful Object in South Africa) and winner of the 2018 South African Property Owners Association's (SAPOA) Most Transformative Project in South Africa.

*'... it will take the university into the community to co-create responses to societal issues'*



**FIRST PRIZE:** Silindokuhle Pre-School, designed by activist architect and PhD fellow Kevin Kimwelle, in Joe Slovo West township in Nelson Mandela Bay metro. Built from recycled wooden pallets and bottles, it is the 2018 winner of the South African Property Owners Association's (SAPOA) Most Transformative Project in South Africa. Kevin's work is featured on the new Common Good First online website.



# Breaking ground

## *Journey towards medical school gains momentum*

The first phase of our exciting journey towards the establishment of the country's 10th medical school is gaining momentum with refurbishment of some buildings on Missionvale Campus now underway.

The medical school not only promises our university a great growth opportunity, but will also benefit the surrounding Missionvale community, the metro and the province. This is especially in light of a critical shortage of not only doctors, but all qualified health professionals.

In the Eastern Cape, for example, there is only one doctor to every 4230 patients, and the majority of these doctors are in private practice. Yet only 10% of people in the Eastern Cape have medical aid to benefit from their private practice services.

In short, the university wishes to honour Nelson Mandela who said 'health cannot be a question of income. It is a fundamental human right,' by offering a qualification that is relevant to the needs of ordinary South Africans.

### **Upgrading**

To enable this, a R86 million revamp of various buildings, including lecture halls and laboratories, began late in October. This is to ensure readiness for an accreditation visit by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) in March 2019.

All facilities and supporting research and teaching equipment for hosting the MBChB degree must meet strict criteria. If this accreditation and all other necessary support and approvals are timeously received, the university is set to welcome its first cohort of 100 medical students in 2020.

**'Health cannot be a question of income. It is a fundamental human right' – Nelson Mandela**

The remaining R41m of the R127m received from the Department of Higher Education and Training towards establishing a medical school is for procurement of state-of-the-art equipment. This process is also underway.

### **Innovative model**

The innovative teaching model that the Faculty of Health Sciences is already piloting will also set the university apart. In seeking to honour Mandela's legacy, the university's medical programme will have a primary health care focus and embrace a collaborative practice approach.

The innovative interprofessional education (IPE) model will see doctors, nurses, radiographers, environmental health practitioners, psychologists, pharmacists and the like, work and study together to offer a more holistic approach to health prevention and care.

"We want to give relevant programmes. We chose Missionvale for this reason. We need to be socially accountable and serve our communities," says Executive Dean of Health Sciences Professor Lungile Pepeta, adding that Dora Nginza Hospital and other key partners were also integral to the success of the project.

This is also why, trainee doctors and other health science students will work in the field from their first years to offer their services while gaining critical hands-on experience in line with their level of experience.

"Our students will offer support in the clinics and hospitals from their first year. We need to serve society," says Prof Pepeta.

### **Technology**

The distributive teaching model will leverage the benefits of technology. Apart from the state-of-the-art equipment, such as a virtual cadaver and an anatomage table, trainee doctors will be able to join lectures virtually wherever they find themselves in the field.

"We will employ technology to the advantage of our students, and those they serve," says Prof Pepeta.

### **Academic programmes**

The upgrading of Missionvale Campus means that several academic programmes traditionally offered at Missionvale Campus are moving to North, South, Second Avenue and Ocean Sciences campuses in 2019.

## **What's in a name?**

A naming and renaming project to ensure that all our university spaces and places recognise, respect and honour all peoples in ways that resonate with the values of our namesake, Nelson Mandela, will be in earnest in 2019.

The project follows the launch of our new name in 2017, and the need for our university to pro-actively building cohesion and transform.

It will further offer us the opportunity to examine our new identity, enhance our brand and continue to signal our positive intentions during the centenary year of the birth of our namesake.