UNIVERSITY OF THE **FREE STATE**
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE **VRYSTAAT**
YUNIVESITHI YA **FREISTATA**

University of the Free State

Strategic Plan

2012 – 2016

1   Introduction

The arrival of a new Vice-Chancellor in 2009 triggered a process of widespread and profound change at the University of the Free State (UFS). Although it is only more than two years on, much of this change is already taking hold.

The University is increasingly being seen as an exciting place to be. This is evidenced by an unprecedented level of interest from all around the world and has already resulted in the University landing some exceptional publicity coups. The change that is taking place is capturing the imagination of people on and off campus.

One reason for the interest is that the University has set down a clear marker on academic standards. This is evidenced by the increasing number of excellent students in the application pools. It is also evidenced in the number of international scholars enquiring about working with or at the University.

The uncompromising attitude towards academic standards has been tempered with an openness to confront and tackle deep social issues. The University is seen as a place where difficult issues are confronted. It is an institution where social issues are studied, but it is also an institution that sees itself as a community where ideas can be tried, and, further, which is not ashamed to put itself too under the academic microscope. If anything, it is this that has captured the biggest international interest. These two aspects are characterised as the Academic and the Human Projects respectively. They form the key thread throughout this document.

The increased interest and activity does not deny the past. The University has a proud history and tradition, and is repositioned to establish further traditions that build on these foundations. The University undertook a major rebranding exercise in 2010, which resulted in a strong balance between retaining the tradition and modernising the intent. The process brought Sesotho into the naming convention, began to give a brand identity to the Faculties, and allowed stakeholders to be involved by consulting widely. An institutional snapshot is provided in section two.

The change of the last two years has been undertaken without a formal strategic plan. Strategic plans often lag real change and for good reason. The process of change generates many initiatives, some more successful and some less. In a dynamic environment, the balance between creativity and formal planning, and between providing a direction and freezing in a path, must be chosen carefully. The values driving the strategy and the foundations of the strategic plan are looked at in sections three and four respectively.

The heart of this document is focused around the strategic initiatives. These have been grouped under the two key themes of the "Academic Project" (section five), and the "Human Project" (section six). Embedded within these initiatives are the activities of both the core and the support staff. In addition these initiatives are supplemented with the "Support Services Foundation" (section seven), which further underpins the institutional capacity to deliver. Within these themes the many initiatives are clustered by their impact. The clusters are performance of students, performance of academics, academic distinction, and campus academic culture (the Academic Project), confronting prejudice, the culture of inclusion, equity openness and access, and community service and engagement (the Human Project), academic efficiency and the operational changes needed to sustain the above (the Support Services Foundation).

Zhou Enlai, when asked in the 1950s about the French Revolution, was famously quoted as saying: "It is too soon to tell." There is a sense that two years is a very short time in academia. However, after only two years, the UFS is experiencing an overwhelming sense of change, with many tangible effects being felt across campus.

The purpose of this document is both to capture the initiatives under way and to signal the strategic direction of the University over the next five years. It is not a blueprint with the detailed change broken down into numbered, measurable sub-steps; the University is still changing too rapidly, with initiatives being modified, completed or added. While the initiatives will change over time, the values that underpin the strategic plan will not. This strategic plan communicates the values, set out in section three, through the practical examples of the initiatives under way.

Before doing so, an institutional snapshot presents the context for the strategic plan itself.
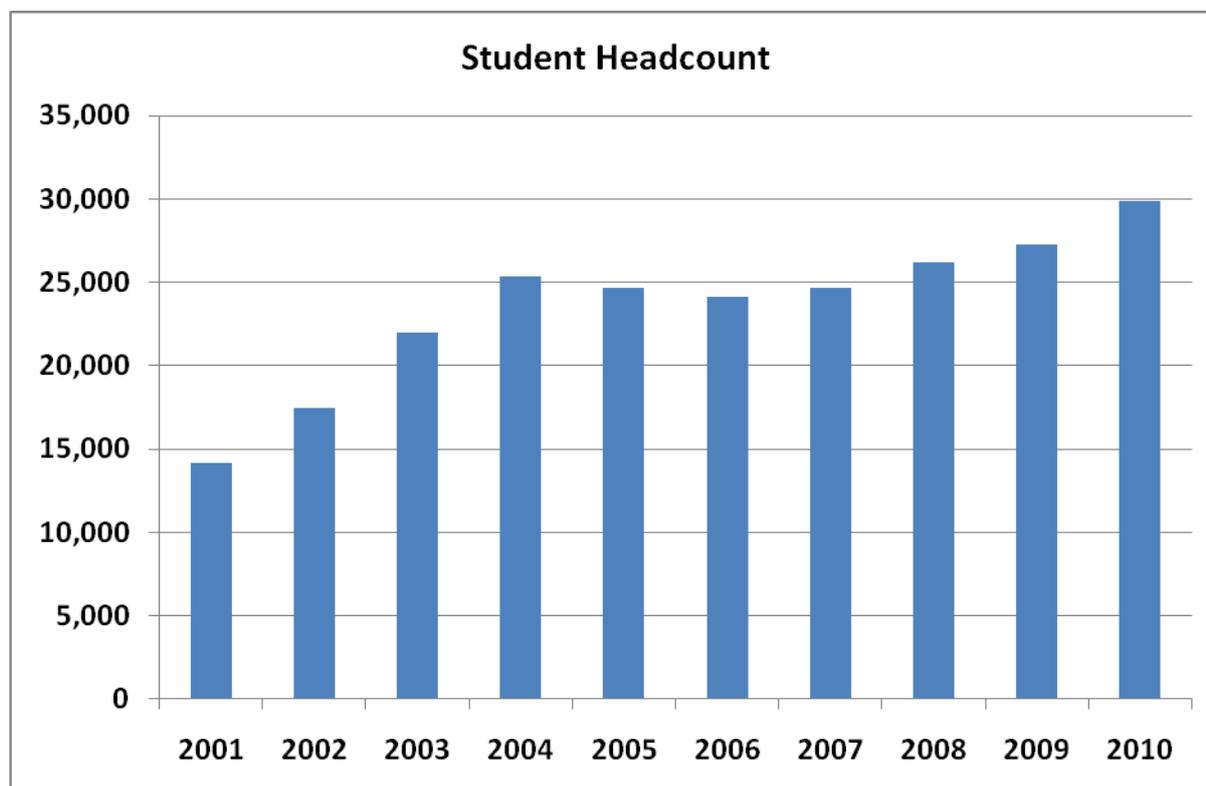
2   An Institutional Snapshot

Situated in the heart of the country, the UFS was established in 1904, and is one of the oldest South African institutions of higher learning. The University serves more than 33 000 students on three campuses, through seven faculties and 97 departments. The seven faculties are Economic and Management Sciences (EMS), Education, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law, Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and Theology.

Most of the students are located on the Bloemfontein Campus, with a vibrant campus in rural Qwaqwa (350 km from Bloemfontein) and a smaller South Campus (just outside the city); the latter, through the University Preparation Programme (UPP), provides alternative access to higher education for gifted but disadvantaged students, students with promise but with weak school-leaving certificates.

	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Female	Male	Total
Bloemfontein Campus	16 107	1 573	493	9 791	16 533	11 423	27 964
Qwaqwa Campus	4 245	7	1	6	2 603	1 656	4 259
South Campus	737	42	3	91	511	362	873
Total	**21 089**	**1 622**	**497**	**9 888**	**19 647**	**13 441**	**33 096**

The table above shows the distribution of the students and their demographics across the three campuses. The total headcount in 2011 is 33 096 students, of whom 27 964 (84%) were on Bloemfontein campus, 4 259 (13%) on the Qwaqwa campus and 873 (3%) on the South campus. Of the students 21 089 (63%) were African, 9 888 (30%) white, 1 622 (5%) coloured and 497 (2%) Indian. The demographics differ by campus with the Bloemfontein campus 58% African while the South and Qwaqwa campuses were 84% and nearly 100% African respectively. By contrast the ratio of women to men is between 58% and 61% for all three campuses.

The academic staff profile differs markedly from that of the students. Of the 785 permanent academic staff in 2011, 78% were white and 22% were African, Coloured, Indian or foreign nationals. For the administrative staff the percentage white is closer to 45%, although in the top three categories (top, senior, and professional) the ratio is again 78%.

Student Headcount

Year	Headcount (approx.)
2001	~14,000
2002	~17,500
2003	~22,000
2004	~25,400
2005	~24,700
2006	~24,100
2007	~24,700
2008	~26,200
2009	~27,300
2010	~30,000

The student headcount increased dramatically between 2001 and 2004. Between 2004 and 2009 it stabilised at about 25 000 students. The student number has again been increasing over the past two years.

	Economic and management sciences	Education	Health Sciences	Humanities	Law	Natural and Agricultural Sciences	Theology	Total
Bloemfontein Campus	5 931	6 399	2 632	4 963	2 605	5 189	241	**27 960**
Qwaqwa Campus	345	1 243	2	2 152		517		**4 259**
South Campus	212			400		246	1	**859**
Total	**6 488**	**7 642**	**2 634**	**7 515**	**2 605**	**5 952**	**242**	**33 078**

The largest faculty is Education with 7 642 students, followed by Humanities (7 515), EMS (6 488) and the Natural and Agricultural Sciences (5 952). The smaller faculties are Health Sciences (2 634), Law (2 605) and Theology (242).

The academic programmes of the University are supported by some 2 587 full-time staff of whom 1 802 are support and 785 academic (including academic management – 2010 figures). The academic full-time equivalents are slightly higher, the difference being made up in part- time appointments.

Permanent Academic Staff in FTEs

Year	FTEs
2004	~1,040
2005	~1,000
2006	~1,075
2007	~1,070
2008	~1,050
2009	~1,145
2010	~1,120
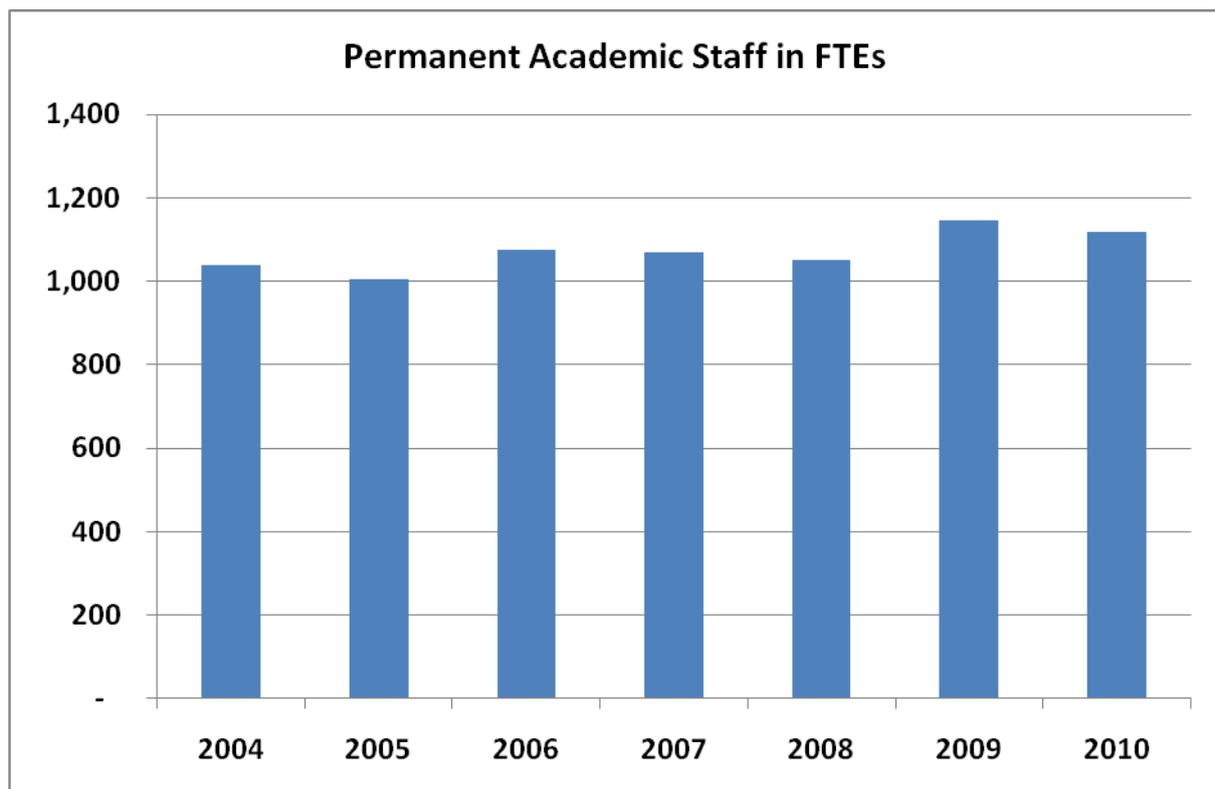
The University has a total revenue (2010) of just more than R1.6bn. Of this some R1.3bn is 'council controlled' and the remainder 0.3bn is restricted, that is funding earmarked for specific activity. The breakdown of the income is R756m in subsidies and grants, and R471m from student fees. The remainder, 'third stream income', comprises R142m of sales of goods and services, R51m of contract work, R65m of gifts and grants and R156m of interest and dividends. The bulk of the expenditure consists of R844m staff costs (R411m academic professional and R436m other personnel) with operating expenses of R535m and some R56m depreciation. There is a net 'surplus' of nearly R200m, much of which is used for capital projects.

The University also faces its own special challenges. It is situated in a largely rural province where poverty, illiteracy and disease hold back the enormous potential of this large expanse of land. The vagaries of climate affect productive capacity in agriculture and the turbulence in world markets affects the mining sector directly. At some distance from the major service economies of Johannesburg and Cape Town, the Free State has to rely on a relatively small fiscal base from which to serve the expansive human and developmental needs of both the province and the country. This and the values presented in the next section provide the context for the strategic plan.

3. "What we value as a university community"

The University is guided by a shared sense of values, and has invested substantial time in discussing and formulating the institutional direction, giving statements over the past year. The motto of the University is **"IN VERITATE SAPIENTIAE LUX"**, which means "**In Truth is the Light of Wisdom"**.

The Vision adopted by the University reads:

A university recognised across the world for excellence in academic achievement and in human reconciliation.

The University will pursue this vision by its mission:

- *Setting the highest standards for undergraduate and postgraduate education.*
- *Recruiting the best and most diverse students and professors into the University.*
- *Advancing excellence in the scholarship of research, teaching and public service.*
- *Demonstrating in everyday practice the value of human togetherness and solidarity across social and historical divides.*
- *Advancing social justice by creating multiple opportunities for disadvantaged students to access the University.*
- *Promoting innovation, distinctiveness and leadership in both academic and human pursuits.*
- *Establishing transparent opportunities for lifelong learning for academic and support staff.*

The following five core values of the University represent deeply-held commitments that inform every policy and steer every action. These values underpin both the Academic Project and the Human Project of this university.

3.1 Superior Scholarship

The University places the highest premium on superior academic performance. This implies high standards for entrance and appointment into the university, and high

standards for performance once inside. The day-to-day benchmarking of academic work against 'best practice' in the rest of the world is becoming entrenched in the daily work of staff and in the everyday culture of the institution. Campus citizens are reminded constantly that they are expected to perform at the top of their game in terms of learning achievements (students) and research achievements (staff).

3.2   Human Embrace

The University has established the reputation of being a place where campus struggles are engaged and behaviour transformed through human embrace. Students and staff are taught to resolve differences of race, gender, class, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, culture, language, national origins, and any other, not through the injunction to tolerate but through the symbols of embrace. The leadership of the University, at all levels, seeks to model such behaviour through everyday decision-making that includes matters of student access, staffing equity, crisis resolution, residence accommodation, curriculum design, classroom teaching, sporting arrangements, and more.

3.3   Institutional Distinctiveness

The University prides itself on doing things differently, and teaches staff and students to go beyond the common wisdom and the prevailing orthodoxy. It is the University's belief that intractable problems cannot be resolved by trying the same old approaches, and that academic competitiveness is only possible through new and creative methodologies. In project review, this question matters: how is this proposal different from and better than what already exists at other universities?

3.4   Emergent Leadership

The University prides itself on creating future leaders and views the formal qualification as only part of the university experience and only part of student development. The University invests heavily in creating an environment where leadership is nurtured and where future leaders are given the opportunity to grow. Leadership is what sets apart a Kovsies graduate from his or her peers; future leaders are expected to understand their responsibility to society and the environment.

3.5   Public Service

It is important to the University that students learn the value of public service through both their formal degree studies and voluntary work in surrounding communities. It is especially important in one of the poorest provinces of the country that the striving for academic excellence co-exists with the quest for public service; in fact, for the UFS the giving of oneself in devotion to those in need is a mark of excellence. The spirit of public service, which the university seeks to inflame in each student, is a quest that is in many ways counter-cultural at this stage in the history of the country.

4   The Foundations of the UFS Strategic Plan – the Academic and the Human Projects

The Academic Project

"An uncompromising commitment to high quality university education"

"Strong social and intellectual community held together by the core values of the academic estate"

The Human Project

"An unflinching commitment to racial reconciliation and social justice"

The Support services foundation
"A firm belief in building academic and human achievement on a strong foundation of quality support services"

This is the first Strategic Plan for the University under the new Rector. It draws upon the plans and documents formulated over the past two years; the aim of this document is to provide an overview and a consensus on the way forward.

The University is in the process of change and this is reflected in the number of initiatives taking place. Some of these initiatives are university-wide and some are

being conceived and implemented at a campus or faculty level. This document aims to capture the breadth and depth of the initiatives being undertaken in the context of the new strategic direction of the University. There are two major themes under which the initiatives are grouped, the Academic Project and the Human Project.

The Academic Project

In 2008, the University had one of the lowest undergraduate success rates in the country. A few years previously the University had faced up to a dangerous financial crisis by retrenching staff, closing units, multiplying modules and taking up students in large numbers in order to build revenue. Large classes were almost unteachable in overflowing lecture venues and the resultant high failure rate left those students no longer at the University unemployed and facing massive debts. Lecturers were often forced into remedial and compensatory mode as they tried to cope with larger numbers and the reduced admission criteria, all the while exacerbated by the parallel-medium language policy with its inherent duplication and the added language burden.

Better teaching and learning of course characterises only part of any 'academic project'. Academic excellence is characterised above all by scholarly pursuit. Despite the large number of PhDs among staff at the time of the crisis, the staff had a poor record of research output. Publications typically occurred in low status local journals. The pressure to publish for promotion or subsidy income led to quantity over quality, short-term output over long-term intellectual incubation of ideas, description rather than analysis. The initiatives associated with the Academic Project aim to build a strong academic institution marked by distinctiveness in teaching, research and public scholarship.

The Human Project

A different set of initiatives has been discussed under the term 'Human Project'. The appointment of the new Rector came in the wake of the infamous Reitz incident, an event of racial humiliation which reverberated

across South Africa and which branded the University as a location of racial tension and prejudice.

The University set itself the task of transforming itself from a community of segregation and distrust, through a process of understanding and reconciliation. It set itself the goal of becoming an exemplar of normal society and an anchor point for the community around it. The associated initiatives are aimed at a university transforming itself into a community underpinned by a universal sense of a common humanity, with openness to the perspectives, experiences and cultures of others, and typified by the best characteristics of academia.

The Academic Project and the Human Project reinforce each other and many of the individual initiatives support both projects. For example, sending a significant number of undergraduate students overseas changes their perception of race, of how people from different cultures interact, their world view and by extension that of their immediate circle. It equally sets higher standards, exposes students to excellence and impels them to benchmark themselves against excellent peers, thus contributing to undergraduate performance and university excellence. In many of the initiatives, excellence is reinforced by the breaking down of historical barriers and in turn the breaking down of human barriers accelerates institutional excellence.

Similarly many initiatives in both the Academic and the Human Projects involve a shift in thinking from an inward-focused provincial institution to one which embraces exchange, encouraging ties with top scholars everywhere, and a reaching out to the community and the world. Over time the University had been seen as becoming increasingly isolated; both the Academic and the Human Projects encourage a more outward and more inclusive approach.

This document represents an emergent strategy. In a dynamic environment ideas are floated, discussed, and modified; they gain support, sponsorship and funding. They relate to other ideas and the strategy emerges from the confluence. The document is the outcome of a wide-ranging set of meetings with the top management, their direct reports and the Deans. This was collated into a draft that

was then tested with the contributors, and again on a wider audience, including some selected council members and members of Senate.

5   Transformation

The University of the Free State, which once served the white minority, primarily in the Free State and in Afrikaans, needed to open up access to black students and staff, once not able to either teach or study here. Transformation at the University includes, but is by no means restricted to, achieving equality and diversity.

The University is therefore committed to ensure that black students not only access the University but succeed within it. It is committed not only to ensure an increase in the number of black academics and administrators, but that they become more visible both in numbers and in authority in key bodies of the campus, such as the Senate and as heads of departments. It is committed to retaining the best traditions of the past, yet doing away with symbols and practices that are offensive, and adding new symbols that reflect other histories and traditions that enrich all campus dwellers. The University is committed to introducing curricula that challenge partisan and parochial thinking and that take a stand on offensive beliefs and practices.

The University sees the social prerogatives of racial justice and racial reconciliation as equally important and mutually reinforcing. It insists on not replacing old victims with new ones and requires of staff and students that they learn to learn and to live together. In this context, it rejects divisive associations and affiliations and commits itself to finding solutions that bring its people together even as it corrects past wrongs.

While race features prominently in the University's history and politics, it is not the only feature of inequality and discrimination that afflicts higher education institutions. A compassionate and inclusive university deals simultaneously with problems of gender imbalances, the problems of access for students and staff with disabilities, the problems of ethnic strain, the problems of xenophobia and homophobia, indeed all prejudice. These varied dimensions of institutional inequalities and discrimination

must be addressed together and in recognition of the intersections between problems of discrimination.

The notion of transformation clearly infuses both the Academic and the Human Projects. It has several important dimensions, which are drawn together below.

Demographics: The University is working on student, staff and council demographics. The University has the largest proportion of black students of the historically Afrikaans universities; over all campuses 70% of the student population is black. However, as with all the historically white universities, there is a majority of white, male academics particularly at senior levels, i.e. in the professoriate. At the level of professor the UFS has more than doubled its number of black professors and will continue to accelerate the appointment of new black academics. The number of black members on the Council of the University has doubled from three years ago. The Chair of the Institutional Forum is now a member of Council, there is union participation, and in 2011 the SRC appointed its first black woman president. Both the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Chair of Council are black, with substantive black representation from the Offices of the Premier and the Minister of Higher Education and Training. Nominated members to Council are, for the first time, now interviewed to ensure that the members bring the kinds of values to this governance structure that advances transformation as described.

Transformation of symbols: Institutional transformation is also reflected in several acts of necessary symbolic reparation. The recent changes to the university logo are deeply transformative, removing partisan and one-sided symbols of past racial order and aggression, and replacing them with a more inclusive set of insignia. Similarly the new Institutional Statute, recently approved and gazetted by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, reflects the religious, cultural and social diversity of a public institution in line with the Constitution as do a new series of artistic works already starting to be installed throughout the campus.

Democratisation and deracialisation of campus: The University has worked hard to create forums for staff and students to participate freely and openly in the making of decisions. Such forums include the town hall meetings, the Monday Bulletins, the

open door policy, the frequent visits to residences and departments, the invitation to comment on draft plans and policies, the invitations to propose plans for coming calendar years, the talk-to-me sessions under trees and in hallways, and many more. All major decisions of senior management are made in consultation with the leadership of Council. At the same time the University has put considerable effort into creating non-racial campuses marked by respect and human embrace. Out of the media eye, acts of racism have been dealt with firmly. Forums for 'learning to live together' have been established in residences. Student leadership at all levels participates in numerous workshops to this end.

Culture of intellectual diversity: Deep transformation requires intellectual diversity and the UFS has been successful in attracting top scholars from around the world, eager to join the institution. Concomitant with that is the UFS being the only South African university to offer a full-credit, compulsory, interdisciplinary, undergraduate programme that requires students to engage with major intellectual questions from our time including those related to ethics, race, identity and religious belief.

6   The Academic Project

The academic project has been grouped into four clusters, namely Performance of Students *("a dramatic improvement in the quality and throughput of the graduates")*, Performance of Academics *("every academic is expected to remain at the forefront of their discipline"),* Academic Distinction *("in addition to staff at the forefront of their field, the University needs magnets of excellence")* and Campus Academic Culture *("deep transformation requires a culture of critical thinking, engagement and debate").* Some of the initiatives relevant to the Academic Project include teaching excellence, curriculum transformation (described together with academic efficiency), student access and equity, and various measures to bolster research excellence and the renewal of the academic culture.

6.1   Performance of Students

In response to the financial crisis a few years ago, the University increased student intake and in consequence class size. The increasing failure rate had a particularly severe impact on poor students who found themselves unemployed, demoralised and probably in debt. There are many initiatives under way to improve student performance, both faculty-specific and campus-wide. These initiatives all impact on student success. The key variables to monitor are throughput (corrected for length of qualification), pass rates (in particular first-year pass rates) and drop-out rates. As a first step the UFS want to take its average pass rate from 72% to 79%, which could translate to an increase in some 2 000 extra FTEs passing per year.

Compulsory Class Attendance and Increased Subminima

The University has decided on several key interventions to improve pass rates and progression. These include compulsory class attendance, the increase in subminima to write examinations and a better flow of information to students and their sponsors. Class attendance, in particular, plays a big role in subsequent student performance. Pilot studies have been conducted on class attendance, particularly on large and

problematic classes (that is classes with low throughput and high failure rates), and in each case compulsory class attendance has made a significant difference to the pass rate (often dramatically better than the most recent year, and better than the historical best pass rate so far). Of course the impact is not just the attendance per se. Compulsory class attendance comes with the obligation by the University to upgrade delivery, physical layout, course materials and teaching styles, all in preparation for the pilots to go live. It also ties in with other initiatives including the consolidation of course materials and the overall curriculum review.

The above initiatives set a clear signal regarding rights and responsibilities as against a more *laissez faire*, anything goes practice. This could be seen as unduly regulated but in reality is no stricter than the expected future professional or work environment.

Compulsory class attendance requires technological support to record attendance. The University has been involved in commissioning the customisation of the appropriate biometric technology, and may continue to hold a lead role as such technology gets taken up by other institutions, or is improved to track performance beyond attendance. Monitoring of implementation requires keeping track of the degree of coverage (weighted by student number), and the improvement in the average pass rate of the classes so covered (possibly corrected for admission where the admission standard has been raised).

Compulsory class attendance also places the quality of tuition (next section) under scrutiny.

The Quality of Tuition

Most academics appointed into university positions are not trained teaching professionals. Many are academic researchers and others come from the professional world (business, agriculture, medicine, for example) without the preparation in learning theory or teaching competencies as in the case of most professors of education, for example. It is important, therefore, that the university reorganises its infrastructure, prioritises its resources, and focuses its expertise on how to attain and sustain high standards of teaching in the academy. This is

especially important when the students come from disparate and unequal scholastic backgrounds in the school system.

It is therefore critical to the mission of the UFS to raise the standards of teaching in both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. This commitment has been pursued through a complex of management interventions, including the following:

- The rationalisation of a large, complex and over-modularised curriculum
- The reduction in class sizes through the provision of more staff and the building of larger teaching venues
- The introduction of educational technologies to facilitate teaching and learning (M-learning, blackboard, video-capture facilities, e-learning, etc)
- The investment in staff development for improved university teaching
- The institutionalisation of teaching support to academics through a Centre for Teaching and Learning
- The extension of contact time available through intensive tutorials
- The deployment of teaching and learning managers within each of the seven Faculties
- The elevation of high-quality teaching within the new promotions and appointments policy as one of three critical elements in the evaluation of candidates for advancement or attachment to the university
- The recorded and systematic observation and documentation of classroom teaching as sources of training and feedback for teaching support
- The systematic evaluation of teaching by students and the active use of such feedback for course design, delivery and overall improvement.

The Academic Admissions Criteria

The academic readiness of first-time university students bears a strong relationship to the likelihood of success or failure. Raising the admission criteria therefore raises the pass rates and decreases the drop-out rates, to the extent that the drop out is predicated by poor academic performance. Last year the University raised its entry criteria with positive effect. The raising of the criteria also sends strong positive signals for high quality education across the schools.

Increased admissions criteria paradoxically deliver a strong application pool i.e. more and better students. Students want to study at an institution which has high standards and where they are associating with carefully selected peers. The indication to raise the minimum admissions criteria even further needs to be checked against the potential for exclusion of students who would cope well with tertiary education but who received poor tuition at high school. The raising of the admissions criteria may need to be implemented step-wise over a few years to ensure that there is no student vacuum from a rapid change.

The applications, the number of excellent candidates in the application pool and of course the pass rate attributable to the better selection (i.e. the correction attributable to better intake) will be monitored.

Alternative Access Points (South Campus)

Increasing the admission criteria raises the issue of equity and access among talented youth under-served by the public school system. South Campus has been set up as an alternative entry mechanism with the aim of selecting students from just below the official cut-off. In principle the selection should be aimed distinctively at gifted but disadvantaged students from this pool, students whose results, though average when compared with national statistics, are nevertheless excellent when rated against their peers.

South Campus has a good track record of success. These programmes rely on smaller class sizes (up to 45 students allows for personal contact), interactive teaching methodologies (which have sometimes acted as pilots for Bloemfontein Campus) but use identical syllabi and indeed exams. They have a comparative (sometimes better) pass rate than Bloemfontein Campus.

After first year, the students then enter the mainstream and again show a good track record of students going on to complete undergraduate and postgraduate studies. South Campus (now called the Campus for Open Learning) will have to increase the number of students, increase the entry criteria in line with Bloemfontein Campus, actively target 'gifted' but disadvantaged students and have a target minimum

number of students (based on a 75% pass rate) expected to join the mainstream on an annual basis.

It will also be the task of the South Campus to monitor the number of students joining the mainstream programmes and their subsequent success. The financial implications of a fully-functioning South Campus will also need to be drawn, including the staff (mainly part-time) numbers needed to raise the student numbers to the physical capacity of 1 500 on that campus.

Improved Teaching Practices (including the Centre for Teaching and Learning)

Higher Education Studies has been restructured as a fifth department under the Faculty of Education. This has created the possibility for a separate Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) devoted to the development of a scholarship of teaching in higher education and the study and improvement of undergraduate teaching at the UFS.

The creation of the CTL will guide the improvement of teaching and learning as is fitting for an academic university and will enhance the University ethos of self-reflection and scholarly pursuit and publication, i.e. to do things better, to reflect objectively on what has happened and to submit that thinking for scholarly review.

As it is being transferred, the cost for the CTL is already within the current budget, although consideration will need to be given to sustainability through research publications and research contract work.

6.2   Performance of Academics

Academics are expected to remain at the forefront of their disciplines and to publish scholarly work in the top journals of their disciplines in order to be able to train the next generation of professionals and, indeed, professors are expected to be internationally recognised experts in their fields. For this reason it is important to monitor the total number of publications and the number of publication units per academic, but also the number of academics who have not published recently, the number who have not had adequate teaching ratings, and the number of faculty positions that have not been filled.

The Academic Promotion Policy

The new academic promotions policy sets high and consistent standards for academic progression especially for promotion into the professoriate, also taking into account the standards of evidence in specialised disciplines such as music and the arts. For example, no person should be considered for promotion to senior lecturer and above without sustained (every year) high levels of research outputs and positive teaching evaluations. The number of unfilled positions and the length of time taken to fill a position will be monitored. The bar is raised by the opening of positions to international competition.

Incentives for NRF Ratings

The existing incentives for NRF ratings will be reviewed so that there is much greater participation in the annual rating exercise and much greater motivation for pursuing upper-level ratings. Part of the promotion requirements above will be the appropriate level of NRF rating. The number of staff without the appropriate NRF ranking will be monitored.

Minimum Research Output Requirement

Research is fundamental to the new vision of the University. Until recently, academic research output was in a state of decline. There were academic departments within

the University with no research outputs and even more with less than 1 unit of production in the recent past. Research production is carried unevenly across the academic departments. The decline in research productivity and outputs not only has negative consequences for individual promotion, it also has institutional consequences in terms of funding and stature for the UFS.

The Senate accepts a minimum requirement of one research unit of publication in accredited journals for every full-time academic member of staff, whether permanent or on contract. The Vice-Rector Academic is responsible for overseeing this function, and ensuring that this standard of performance is met for every academic as specified. The Rectorate is in the process of investigating the incentives that should accompany this requirement.

New System of Tenure

The University leadership has signalled a clear departure from the near automatic transition from initial appointment to permanent appointment. These requirements will be more rigorous and the candidate will be expected to have performed appropriately over the probation period. The balance between teaching, research and scholarship will determine the outcomes of applications for tenure, and an evaluation model has been designed to ensure a transparent process for confirmation.

In the medium term, this will ensure that the professoriate comprises scholars of stature in their fields, and the students benefit from the general lift that would accompany this shift.

6.3   Academic Distinction

Top academics and the best graduate students look to work with the stars in their field. Excellence is the ability to draw in other top academics from across the world, to create pools of critical mass, to generate enthusiasm in colleagues and research students. This is more than good practice. The standards of good practice in terms of teaching and learning, research and administration are looked at in other sections. These initiatives look to attract and support excellence and the activity they create.

This approach of excellence is complemented by the new approach to sporting excellence. This includes the establishment of a high performance centre, with a commercial gym as a focal point. As a result, boxing and swimming will join hockey as SASCOC-accredited sporting codes offered and developed by the University. The attraction of broader student participation has implications for culture, discussed in the section on the culture of inclusion.

New Class of Senior Professors

The purpose of this initiative is to strengthen the professorial core of the university in ways that lead to a sharp increase in scholarly outputs, that attract top postgraduate students, and that build the intellectual climate on the campus.

The University continues to receive applications from South Africa and abroad from senior academics wishing to be considered as one of the 25 senior professors of outstanding quality who could be added to the core of A- and B-rated (or equivalent) scientists and scholars of the university. The Deans have been invited to identify from the short (or long) list those scholars who should be invited for preliminary interviews within the relevant departments.

The resource requirement of this initiative is significant: at least R4m to fund a senior professor, the associated research team, direct costs, overheads and associated activities per annum although each senior professor should become self-funding within three to five years. The output of the senior professor teams will be monitored for research outputs, graduate students and funding attracted.

Academic Clusters for Research

Good research is a collegial activity and requires critical mass to flourish. Research clusters are known to provide a better return on investment with regards to cross-pollination, the potential to create international recognition and the ability to attract grant funding and graduate students. A typical cluster has a central focus that involves several disciplines and brings together resources and a critical mass of people around a theme. It provides a minimum number of PhD graduates each year and a minimum number of publications in international prestige journals. It is

internationally recognised as an institutional competence and ideally supports national, regional and institutional priorities.

The University has identified six such clusters that will bring staff and students together to create a 'community of scholars'. These include:

1. Water management in water-scarce areas
2. New frontiers in poverty reduction and sustainable development
3. Transformation in highly diverse societies
4. Technologies for sustainable crop industries in semi-arid regions
5. Material science and nano sciences
6. Advanced biomolecular research.

These clusters are also aligned with national research priorities, and would therefore be eligible to draw funding from the Department of Science and Technology through the NRF.

The new social sciences cluster is a potential addition. The monitoring will involve setting minimum targets of publications by postgraduates and of external funding for each cluster. The clusters might at times require investment but would typically be expected to be fully self-funding (including overheads and University charges).

Research Chairs

The South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) is a flagship initiative designed to attract and retain excellence in research and innovation at South African universities. Currently, the Department of Science and Technology invests R200m each year, supporting 92 research chairs, with six of these co-funded with business. The original round of applications came when the University was struggling with its reputation.

The UFS has applied for several of these research chairs in the current round, and these are across disciplines beyond the research clusters identified. The target would be to create a critical mass of researchers in the funded area, so that each chair is geared to produce several master's and PhD graduates in the five-year period that the programme is funded. The research output should build up to the

point that the chair is self-funding within the five years, so that it can continue even if there is no renewal.

The Vice-Chancellor's Prestige Scholars Programme

This initiative selects 25 of the most promising young scholars (post-doctoral staff members) for intensive preparation to become the next generation of UFS professors. With intensive mentorship in the home institution and placement alongside leading scholars in their fields in other countries, the 25 prestige scholars will be placed on a fast-track scholarship programme with high-level research outputs over a three-year funded cycle. This initiative draws young scholars from the humanities and the sciences, and does not displace other capacity building actions for all young academics.

The outputs of the prestige scholars will be carefully monitored over the five years subsequent to the investment. More importantly, there is a need to create a new intake on an annual basis, and to track the retention of these scholars by the University as they progress with their post-doctoral studies.

6.4   Campus Academic Culture

The University prides itself in creating not just graduates but future leaders; part of this is the creation of an academic environment that encourages thinking and debate. Several initiatives cross-reference to this including the core curriculum, the access to leaders and the various leadership-related initiatives. The academic culture of the University is expected to broaden education as the basis for intelligent participation in public life and to engage students with difficult questions that often fuel campus conflict and social distance among those different from each other (questions of identity, fairness, faith and change).

The Postgraduate School

Postgraduates are a critical part of a research university. They constitute the next generation of academics, create fresh opportunities for international research partnerships, and contribute to the necessary infrastructure for new generation scholarly research.

For postgraduate students to thrive they need community. The old South African academic model was one of apprenticeship based on one-on-one interactions with a supervisor; this model does not translate well into a global scholarly environment. For this reason the UFS envisages the establishment of a new model for postgraduate education centred on a Postgraduate School.

A Postgraduate School caters separately for the administration, development, promotion and advancement of postgraduate students and studies at the UFS. In line with trends elsewhere, the goal is to build a strong and coherent postgraduate student community with high and consistent standards and expectations of postgraduate teaching, research and administration across the seven Faculties.

There are many things to be monitored, including the undergraduate / postgraduate mix, and the postgraduate success and throughput rates. For postgraduate education to be successful, it will be necessary to monitor the cost and revenue of both the centre and postgraduate activity across the University.

Repositioning Student Affairs

Student Affairs is repositioning itself from clinical support i.e. offering selected services to students requesting them, to what might be termed "learning engagement". Learning engagement involves championing the development of graduates both as learners in their field and as future leaders in society. This involves several big shifts and will have important resource implications. It will have an impact on confronting prejudice (cluster four) and play a major role in the drive to change student culture (cluster five).

The shift to proactively engaging the student community involves a change in how the University sees "extracurricular" activity, no longer competing with the curriculum but in a real sense enhancing it. It implies a more active faculty engagement; the faculties need also to engage "the student experience". It involves helping the student integrate the different campus experiences even to the extent of reviewing the campus architecture, and it involves conscious reflection on the factors shaping the experience of the student and that of the graduate.

Part of its task is career development, which involves tracking each student's curricula and co-curricular activities and helping the student to build a portfolio relevant to the post-University transition.

The shift detailed above changes the nature of student affairs, which then takes on the role of an academic centre rather than that of a support office. Student affairs staff will see themselves as academics; they will be expected to publish and present their results internationally and to earn research-related income. Their 'third stream income' would be their project, in this case internal project, assisting the University to change the character of student engagement and the characteristics of the UFS graduate.

Campus intellectual culture

The University is concerned about the narrowing of the academic agenda in response to the increasing regulation of higher education functions and the growing preoccupation with "getting students through" in the context of poor schooling backgrounds. Universities are threatened by metaphors of production that reduce institutions to academic factories concerned with optimising funding streams. The lack of a vibrant culture of public scholarship diminishes universities in terms of their distinctive mandate as intellectual centres, where ideas are tested and contested in democratic spaces without fear or prejudice.

The University has set in place a number of strategic interventions to grow intellectual life on its three campuses, including:

- The review of existing honorary lectures so that more visible, public and critical scholars and scholarship are brought into the mainstream speaking series; these invited speakers address the pressing issues of the day as leading intellectuals from this and other countries. The Centre for African Studies is a prime example of such public lectures infiltrating the campus.
- The establishment of new centres and institutes which not only match the new expertise being brought into the campus environment but which bolster existing sites of excellence; the International Institute for Studies in Race, Reconciliation and Social Justice is a prime example of such intellectual renewal.

- The competition for high-status research chairs to be established at the university to bring national and international visibility to our scholarship, but also to use these seats of excellence to spur research activities including seminars, publications, etc; six chairs were proposed in 2011 through SARChI.

It is critical to the strategic direction of the University to build such a campus intellectual culture that addresses important issues percolating in the broader society and in this way builds cultures of tolerance, debate, and the value of rational and deliberate thought across the student body and within the community of staff.

7   The Human Project

The Human Project has been grouped into four clusters, namely confronting prejudice *("a university responds to and initiates changes in the world around them"),* the culture of inclusion ("*a culture of respect, discussion, dialogue and dissent*"), equity, openness and access *("a university which thrives on greater racial, intellectual and geographical diversities")* and community service and engagement *("academic excellence co-exists with the quest for public service")*. Some of the initiatives relevant to the Human Project include building inclusive cultures, preparing the new student leadership, extending public scholarship, institutional transformation and inter-campus equity.

7.1   Confronting Prejudice

It is part of the student experience to meet people across society's typical boundary lines and indeed to make lasting friendships. In South Africa these include in particular race but also ethnicity, nationality, gender, disability, sexual orientation, faith and even faculty.

As microcosms of society at large, universities both respond to and initiate changes in the world around them. The tensions in the broader community make it even more important to confront prejudice on campus and thus make the University a strong social and intellectual community held together not by racial or ethnic bonds but by the core values of the academic estate.

The readiness to deal with prejudice has put a positive spotlight on the institution. This has a direct impact on the number of people (new students, academics, donors) who would want to be associated with the institution, and in turn enables the University to up its game on the academic excellence aspects.

Residence policy

Residences play an important role in campus life, particularly at the UFS where the individual residences have a long, respected tradition. Residences have been required to integrate to break the rigid racial divisions that marked them; this has been achieved largely but more work is being driven by both the students and the administration.

New staff and strategies are now in place to not only *desegregate* the residences but to socially *integrate* the student body within these intimate spaces of residential life, and to deal with those 'stubborn pockets of resistance' that remain.

The growth of the University also opens up the potential to increase the number of new residences, and in turn to start building new cultures that are based on the new experiences. This would impact on the throughput rate; residence students, particularly in first year, have greater success. It would also encourage many of the extracurricular activities, which will help create a culture of excellence and of inclusion.

Student Anti-Prejudice Programmes (The Gateway College)

This is a leadership project aimed at integrating all the entry students. The students attend an intensive two-week residence-based programme before the University commences. It gives first-time students a taste of university residence life, a chance to integrate and a chance to form new and deep friendships across the old institutional faults.

The Gateway College tackles issues around academic culture, confronting prejudice, leadership and community engagement.

Integration on campus

This includes anti-racist and stereotype reduction programmes within residences and among student leaders. It also includes the creation of critical spaces for democratic dialogue and exchange. This entails the funding and support of student debates, the visits of special speakers on subjects like race and identity, and of course the

memorial lectures and residence-based forums. Included in this are the complete outlawing of destructive processes such as first-year initiation, alcohol on campus and rituals that treat first-year students as children. The integration is reinforced with international exchange programmes, which see our students abroad and exchange students spending time on our campus.

Integration on campus includes also the extension of extracurricular activities typically associated with residence students. Students are expected to have a broader University experience, linking to, for example, the thinking behind the core curriculum, thereby changing the student culture, and indeed the nature, of our graduates.

There are many activities already under way such as the fellowship programme, where visiting international scholars spend time with students in a residence environment, cultural renewal on campus, broadening student participation in student community, and the encouragement of learning communities on issues of interest to students.

A key driver of integration on campus is student leadership. Student governance is currently under the microscope, with a view to ensuring that the process of debate is constructive no matter how difficult the topic. Included are the 25 student leadership modules, with a required attendance threshold to be met for potential student leaders to qualify to stand for student leadership office.

The International Institute for Studies in Race, Reconciliation and Social Justice

An idea first mooted in the wake of the Reitz incident, there have since been extensive consultations prompting the establishment of this Institute with shared institutional and external fundraising. The Institute, currently headed by Prof. André Keet, has already sketched a programme of research, teaching and intervention that will lie at the heart of the deeper transformation of human relations on campus and in the country, and with connections to conflicted and post-conflict societies in other parts of the world. It is housed in the DF Malherbe House as a premier national and

international site for scholarship and research on the themes of race, reconciliation, forgiveness and social justice studies within the context of higher education.

7.2 Culture of Inclusion

The University has set itself the task of being hard on standards and uncompromising on academic excellence.

The ideal culture balances this with a culture of caring and respect. The culture of respect creates space for discussion, dialogue and dissent. The culture of caring allows the University to take a stronger stand on academic excellence.

Compulsory Undergraduate Core Curriculum

A core undergraduate curriculum for all first-year students has been piloted, which emphasises not early specialisation but broad knowledge; it conveys the intellectual qualities needed to enable students to think critically and engagingly across the domains of science, aesthetics, ethics, culture, values and ideas.

The core curriculum consists of 12 credits organised around NINE BIG QUESTIONS, covering fields as varied as nanotechnology, ethics and astronomy. The core curriculum also has an academic development benefit as it provides added foundations for academic reading, writing and reasoning lodged in an interdisciplinary understanding of the world. It is critically part of introducing students to an academic campus culture and is part of the preparation of future leaders beyond the specific training offered within their primary qualification.

The Institutional Language Policy

The Strategic Plan affirms the existing university language policy. Afrikaans has always played an important role on campus and will continue to do so. Both English and Afrikaans will continue as languages of instruction. The official language policy of the University adopted by Council is that of parallel medium instruction in Afrikaans and English wherever practically possible.

Universities are an important vehicle for language development and the University accepts the challenge to play a leading role as well in the development of Sesotho

as a teaching language, possibly at the level of tutorials, self-study assignments, and extracurricular engagement.

Some programmes might consider offering first- and second-year courses in all three dominant Free State languages. This would decidedly move a new cohort of students into cognitive advantage, knowing that the fundamental learning was done in their primary language.

The First-Year Study Abroad Programme

The University successfully piloted the placement of 100 students on the study abroad programme. The aim is to afford students an 'eye-opener' to the world. It is currently being expanded to 150 students, with a rigorous selection process. The students form an exchange with our partner universities. An added benefit is that every few years the UFS hosts a group of exchange students for up to a month.

There seem to be different ways of expanding the pilot, the one being to open it to all first- year students, the other to ensure that a critical mass (20%) of all students is reached. A third could be a minimum first semester examination mark (60%).

The challenge, apart from the funding, will be to ensure that the group size remains at a manageable number of students per institution thus avoiding regrouping, ensuring manageability on the part of the host and an authentic university experience. The progress of the funded students will be monitored, although the collateral benefits of these leaders on their peers and the effects of the incentive to be included are also important benefits.

7.3   Equity, Openness and Access

Transformation at the University includes, but is by no means restricted to, achieving racial redress. The all-encompassing nature of transformation means that key transformational initiatives are scattered throughout the document. This section deals with addressing staff diversity, inter-campus equity and access to leaders.

Addressing Staff Diversity

The UFS, like all of the historically white universities, has a majority of white academics and especially white male academics, particularly at senior levels of appointment i.e. in the professoriate. At the level of professor, the UFS more than doubled its number of black professors within a period of 12 months, including in its ranks several new academic stars.

The new tenure and performance criteria create openings for new staff. The aim will be to fill the gaps with great and potentially great academics, who better reflect the demographics of society.

 The diversity of academic staff demonstrates consistency and integrity, provides role models and creates the same diverse collegiality as advocated for the student population. The University has been very successful in attracting top scholars from around the world eager to join the institution. These are mainly tenured professors at leading universities, already established as top scholars in their countries. In any university, professors coming from the outside provide new ideas, fresh theories, alternative methodologies, extended research networks and linkages, additional capacities such as grant-competitiveness, and introduce broader debates within classrooms, residences and Senate. Ideally Deans would review appointments in suites of five to ensure an appropriate balance.

Access to Leaders – the Building of a Campus Community

The campus has been "opened up" so that students and staff "feel" that their leaders are accessible. Actions include the campus "talk to me" sessions, the Monday Bulletins, the big hall meetings, the in-residence consultations, the walk-in sessions, and many others.

Implementing this type of intervention is a matter of style, and different leaders may choose various access avenues. The nature of a university allows leaders to diverge in their approach to issues, and leaders should identify those modes of contact that make them accessible without leaving them uncomfortable.

Evaluation by students and staff, and even an annual perception survey, would show leaders how successful they had been.

Inter campus equity and the Qwaqwa Campus Revitalisation Strategy

The Qwaqwa Campus plays an important role in bringing higher education to the Eastern Free State. The campus has some 3 800 students and 230 staff. It awards degrees and diplomas and became part of the University in 2003.

Part of the revamp is infrastructural. The campus needs new residences, a new lecture block and offices. However the bigger part is a refocusing of the curricula. There is a need to better integrate the campus, upgrade its teaching facilities and increase the pass rate.

A strategy is being devised that will create well-focused offerings and provide specific foci of excellence. There will be three basic courses, a focused BSoc Sc, a BEd, BSc, BComm and BA. Everyone will be provided with a good undergraduate education, which is well articulated with the postgraduate studies of the University. The faculties will continue to bring in additional modules to improve the offerings, driven by demand. The social science degree may be repositioned for a social work qualification, which would have more direct value and work opportunities for a rural, poverty-stricken locality. The first step may be to introduce community development modules as a precursor to a full-blown qualification. In addition possible unique qualifications such as, for example, agricultural engineering are being considered so as to attract students from outside the current student pool.

At the same time the pockets of excellence for world class expertise, research and graduate studies will create the culture and ethos of a university. The plan to establish the Montane institute is based on the proximity to a unique geographic location with high scientific research output potential. The responsibility of the University is to establish the infrastructure that will draw the leading researchers to this area.

The Qwaqwa Campus is therefore a key feeder into the postgraduate pool. To do this it needs its own pockets of excellence and thereby a proper university culture.

It will be crucial for management to monitor continually the quality of the undergraduate offerings, the throughput of the campus, the number of students going on to postgraduate education, as well as the research and graduate outputs of the centres of excellence.

7.4   Community Service and Engagement

It is important to the UFS that students learn the value of public service through both their formal degree studies – such as the various service learning programmes that count for credit towards the qualification – and through voluntary work in surrounding communities where there is need. It is especially important in one of the poorest provinces of the country that the striving for academic excellence co-exists with the quest for public service; for the UFS the giving of oneself in devotion to those in need is a mark of excellence. The spirit of public service which the university seeks to inflame in each student flies in the face of rampant consumerism and self-indulgence in the broader society; it is a quest that is in many ways counter-cultural at this stage in the history of the country. That is all the more reason why students are taught to value the application of their skills – from architecture to teacher education to medicine to history to media studies and more – for the improvement of the human condition.

The University-School Partnership Project

The UFS has consciously aligned its community engagement efforts with the deficiencies encountered in the schooling system, to expand the opportunity for a university education to selected feeder schools from where it may draw in first-generation university entrants from poor families.

The University has identified, with the provincial department of education, 23 of the worst performing schools in the district, and developed a programme with teachers, governing bodies and parents to improve the quality of learning over the next five years. The top performing students from these schools would be drawn into University education and supported further, and the programme will expand to a further set of schools, even beyond the immediate catchment area.

The programme has entered a new phase, which involves tackling the learning culture of the intermediary schools feeding into two of the schools on the programme. The infrastructure, skills and well-being of learners are included in this programme, called the "Extreme Make-over", with Bloem-Oos intermediary school, which feeds into Kagiso and Tsoseletso secondary schools.

The University will actively seek funding to increase the programme's reach, including the potential support needed for disadvantaged students to enter tertiary education. Of the 316 schools in the province the EMIS data shows roughly 100 schools with less than a 60% pass rate (not necessarily university entrance passes). This may be the critical mass that the programme needs to expand to. Taking the top 10 students from the bottom 100 schools may be the best demonstrable manifestation of the culture of inclusion and of excellence.

'No student hungry' programme

The first phase completed, where public servings were held for poor students (workers also came), the university has embarked on a fundraising campaign to ensure that students in severe need can access food on campus.

The programme currently serves a meal per day to more than 6 000 deserving students, and hosts events to raise awareness and funding for the programme. The project also ties in to a host of wellness and health awareness campaigns run for students on campus.

8. Support Services Foundation

The foundation has been grouped into two clusters, namely Academic Efficiency and Governance, Management and Operational Efficiency.

8.1 Academic Efficiency

The academic administration is suffering under the strain of the uncontrolled expansion. With the need to focus on revenue in order to keep the University financially above water there has been a massive growth in offerings. This has put strain on the academic administration. However the initiatives in this section cover the interplay between greater efficiency and lower costs through better focus and greater academic integrity.

The Review of Academic Administration

The review process has been completed, and new leadership put in place to drive the upgrade of academic administration. The rapidly changing environment, with the review in curriculum, reduction in modules and programmes, means the plan is a moving target from one semester to the next.

The University has to publish new formats of qualifications in advance of applications, accommodate students (often repeaters) in programmes that are being phased out, and honour its commitments to existing students even when it is not financially feasible to do so.

The streamlining also includes bringing the core curriculum into the degree contract, and how to carry the partially funded Alternate Entry Project (on South Campus). The other key modernisation projects include the digitisation of the student and physical records of the University.

Consolidation and Curriculum Review

The move of the University to become a research university requires greater focus and greater efficiency. At present there are too many offerings, qualifications and modules. These have the effect of increasing complexity and reducing efficiency. The complexity challenges many of the initiatives including the move to better economies and academic integrity. The biggest drawback is the propensity to undervalue programmes with inappropriate options. There is a need to move away from lowest common denominators, to solutions which serve students better in the long run.

The first phase is a consolidation of 23 000 different modules to some 3 000 and of some 1 800 programmes to 300. Here the integrity of the programme is monitored including the number of credit hours in order to establish greater efficiency and effectiveness in the overall curriculum offerings of the University.

This massive undertaking is being done rapidly. It will be followed by a programme-by-programme critique, which would not have been possible with 1 800 programmes. These programmes will then be benchmarked against the equivalent best in the world, with local and international reviewers and with the aim of upgrading the offerings.

This will have an impact on efficiencies (cost per student) and pass rates and, due to the change in credit hours and level, will raise the standards while decreasing the hours for the qualifications. Critically, the cognitive complexity of the programme will be maintained (if not increased – students were often taking more but lower level programmes), so as not to devalue the qualification. However the key variables to monitor are probably not the outcomes but the output, being the number of qualifications and modules on offer.

Review of the numbers and the Program Qualification mix

The University is intending to become a research-focused university. The increased throughput rate and improved focused programmes will allow a decrease in the number of undergraduates (but with the same number of graduations) of some 3 000

to 4 000 students and therefore automatically will provide room for postgraduate students. This may be further enhanced by deliberately cutting back on the undergraduate intake. This would allow postgraduates more in line with a typical research university and dramatically increase the number of postgraduate degrees awarded and of publications.

To be monitored would be the fraction of Master's and PhD students to undergraduates, and the number of postgraduate qualifications, in particular PhDs, awarded per year.

8.2   Governance, Management and Operational Improvement

The University's aspiration to be a world-class engaged university requires a highly effective decision-making process, with constructive engagement from its leadership to make bold decisions and to try out new things.

This ethos would be embodied in the capacity of Council to be informed and supportive of initiatives, and to be champions for the institution. They would steer the overall direction, and their deliberations would leave the University community confident of their support. They would also have mechanisms in place to ensure that urgent matters requiring the attention of Council could be attended to without stalling practical management and operational processes.

The management of the institution should feel empowered to approach and engage Council on matters relating to the University governance, external relations and future direction.

Upgrade of Facilities

There has been a massive growth in numbers over the last few years, from some 6 000 to some 30 000 students, at a time when the University was recovering from the financial crisis. The obvious cutbacks were in maintenance and services, so the infrastructure has not kept up with the increased demand.

The UFS must actively invest in the infrastructure to support its numbers over the next few years, finding a balance between preservation of iconic or historic buildings

and modernising the facilities. There are several categories to keep in mind as the planning unfolds.

Firstly, there is insufficient lecture hall space for large classes. With the consolidation of programmes, this may become an even bigger problem if not factored into the development plans. Apart from the new facilities, equipping and upgrading of old lecture halls would include audiovisual equipment to support increasing use of technology for sharing of information. The lecture hall utilisation planning should be optimised to benefit all faculties. With a reduced number of programmes, this will be easier to achieve.

Secondly, many of the University's traditions have arisen from its status as a residential university, but the current number of students has changed that definition. Initiatives to bring the residential experience to more students may bridge this divide, but a major effort (including fundraising) would need to go into a building programme for University residences. The layout of these spaces must consider the integration of student life and the academic pursuit. It could have implications for the culture of the University. At the same time the initiatives to integrate non-residence students may require infrastructural support, including issues around transport, safety and IT integration.

New considerations in facilities, including energy efficiencies, green sources of energy, will impact on the pace at which some of these developments can unfold. There is full acknowledgement that a gap in maintenance arose during the financial austerity period, but this has also created an opportunity to invest in better technologies in the present time.

Operational Excellence

The key to this is the systems that allow the University to work smarter not harder. This need not come with a large increase in administrative staff, particularly as the University wants to invest heavily in academic staff. It will require that the administrative staff be trained so that the University can create a world class culture of service under the motto: Every student, every staff member, every parent taken seriously.

Evidence-Based Decision-Making Capability

The University is moving from making institutional decisions based on historical behaviour or managerial preference to evidence-based decision-making; that is a greater reliance on solid institutional data available through the thoughtful and systematic collection of data. Centred in the reorganised Directorate for Institutional Research and Planning (DIRAP), an illustrative set of institutional data critical to decision making includes:

- Data on student backgrounds – the University collects data on students' school of origin to track where new students come from, and how this distribution changes over time. Such data is critical for marketing purposes.
- Data on student experiences – the University collects data on how students experience the university in relation to previous or current problem areas such as race relations. Such data is critical for student development interventions.
- Data on staff satisfaction – the University collects data on how staff experiences the institution in a range of functions from general campus experiences to development opportunities to what the University calls the 'sense of belonging'. Such data is critical for professional development interventions.
- Data on customer service – the University intends to collect data on how outsiders experience the university and how insiders (staff visiting HR or students visiting the financial aid office, for example) evaluate such campus interactions. Such data is critical for middle-manager decisions on how to prepare staff for the efficient execution of their line service functions.
- Data on student performance – the University collects data on how well students progress and pass through graduation, and at what pace (time to degree) and in what fields or disciplines of enrolment. Such data is critical in planning academic development support.
- Data on staff performance – the University collects data at decentralised points (often within departments or units) in order to establish staff growth and attainment with respect to academic or service functions. Such data is critical for reasons that include decisions on rewards and incentives.

- Data on alumni performance – the University plans to assemble a comprehensive database on alumni including their changing status in the workplace and their singular achievements in their respective fields. Such a database also enables a more effective strategy for raising resources and support from the growing numbers of alumni in South Africa and abroad.

Smart universities collect and use evidence, or institutional intelligence, to track performance in, say, HR or finances, so that quick decisions can be made early on and informed decisions can be made with confidence in steering a large, complex organisation such as a university.

Fundraising Strategy

The fundraising strategy aims to raise R145m over the next 18 months for capital projects, as well as funding for institutional strategic projects and unit-based funding for faculty and research centre projects.

At the three levels, the involvement of the Rector in profiling the institution is pivotal and evident. The important operational step is the conversion of pledges to funds, so that the impetus is not lost from the time a potential donor has committed.

At a unit level, the University needs to update its guidelines on the involvement of staff in externally-funded work, as part of its third stream income strategy. The guideline needs to work for all the stakeholders, so that there is a fair return for bringing in third stream income, and so that the researcher can gain the brand and infrastructure benefit of channelling the work through the UFS.

Marketing Strategy

The primary focus of the marketing initiatives is the quality of students. Along with that come the lecturers who are attracted to faculty performance, the sponsors who want to associate with success, and employers who are looking for reliable output.

The UFS has projected itself as a vibrant, caring institution that has endless possibilities. The rebranding exercise has repositioned the image of the institution as

modern and inclusive, but the enduring image is in the number of new public relations highlights that keep the University in the spotlight.

The Rector participates in the marketing drive to schools, and Faculties run winter school programmes aimed at high schools. Faculties also identify specific programmes for which the marketing department develops targeted recruitment, particularly in those careers to which learners from poor schools might not enjoy exposure. The enduring advocates for the institution though will be the alumni of the present phase, who are experiencing the creation of a community of excellence.

The marketing drive needs to make use of the positive elements of community and excellence. The University would also be able to assess the impact of its marketing initiatives by correlating the number and quality of applications from specific schools with the interactions the UFS has had with those particular schools. A key focus is "Learners become leaders", which epitomises both the academic and the human programmes and the measures in place to attract the best students from around the country.

IT Strategy

The emphasis on student performance and lecturer capability, among others, has important implications for IT, in the form of applications, infrastructure and support. The University needs to ensure that all students have ready access and the necessary support for technology tools that are integral to the learning experience. Already initiatives include the establishment of computer labs in all the residences. The UFS also forms part of a country-wide consortium to allow students to purchase laptops at a value price. The readily available mobile phone platform has been integrated into several pilot projects to enhance the students' access to learning materials through technology. This allows students to access assessment, simulation and revision modules in their own time.

These developments impose a set of new requirements on IT capacity and support. Firstly, lecturers' skills levels need to be continually upgraded to optimise the use of interactive platforms. This also means the development of modules with increasing cognitive complexity to build on the students' knowledge, and the ability to assess

performance in these modules. The support at a functional level requires a per faculty assessment of tools and aids available for lecturers. Blackboard technology has been integrated into many modules, and the E-learning unit would need to continually introduce additional learning-enhancing tools.

The broader IT infrastructure plan has to take a long-term view, to migrate from occasional access to "always-on" status for 30 000 students over the next five years. This would include the potential shift in many varied facets such as licensing for software, purchase of library journals, Wi-Fi coverage, data storage capabilities, etc.

Faculties as 'profit centres'

For a University to be empowered, it is important to be able to devolve decision making, which implies the need for faculties (and indeed schools) to manage themselves as mini-universities with all the implications for academic reputation, staff excellence and programme integrity. From a financial perspective it means that Deans must think not just of costs but of the balance between cost and revenue.

The tool used by the Programme Planning and Development Unit to evaluate the academic offerings, by looking at the modules, their credit hours and their NQF level, is a remarkable database with a remarkable interface. On the financial level it gathers together the costs of the modules (often across qualifications) and the qualification revenue including fees, input subsidy and expected output subsidy. The tool allows academics to balance cost and revenue and make academic decisions. This is the penultimate step to profit centre responsibility.

This reconfiguration has to be seen in the context of total cost and total revenue. This has some important implications. Firstly, in principle, an improved programme structure should free up resources. In practice the savings only materialise if the process is actively managed. Secondly, the re-configured mix may well have revenue implications, higher throughput, more postgraduates, increased publications. This revenue needs to be explicit as there is a real danger otherwise that relatively small discretionary income gains a disproportionate emphasis at a management level.

The responsibility extends further to Deans monitoring the financial performance of the faculty. They are key partners in the co-funding of initiatives that improve the performance and profile of the faculties. This means there must be active participation of Deans and faculty members in funding partnerships, including but not limited to exchange and collaboration agreements with other universities.

9   The University in five years' time

This Strategic Plan has been written around the initiatives that have started to shape and will continue to shape the University over the next five years. It provides an overview of the transformation under way and in doing so it provides a framework for the many people involved to contextualise, prioritise and appreciate their own contributions. This is a supplementary framework within which to conceive of the current activities of individuals and entities, namely a framework that looks retrospectively at "where the University expects to be".

This concluding section puts the strategic plan into context by looking at where the University expects to be in five years' time. It has been grouped under 10 headings to capture the extent and complexity of the change expected over the medium term. The University expects to be:

1. **One of the top three research and teaching universities in South Africa, thereby laying the initial groundwork for academic excellence and academic competitiveness on a worldwide scale.**

   This is the Academic Project writ large and is mirrored in many of the initiatives around teaching and learning, academic distinction and the curriculum overhaul.

   The Academic Project changes not only the academic culture; it changes the academic composition of the University as well. The greater pass rate on the one hand (more graduates for the same headcount) and the greater emphasis on research on the other will treble the fraction of postgraduate students over the medium term and quintuple the number of PhD students. This in turn will further change the academic culture, giving the University a strong graduate school element, which will in turn feed the aspirations of undergraduate students.

2. **The leading South African university in terms of building a humane and inclusive academic environment that embraces all human diversities**.

The University will be seen as an institution that sets an international example of how universities and indeed communities can overcome conflict, division and bitterness through the twin pursuits of reconciliation and social justice. The Human Project covers much of this both in terms of confronting prejudice and in terms of creating a culture of inclusion. Indeed, a culture of respect creates space for discussion, dialogue and dissent and is the basis for a culture of scholarly self-reflection.

In five years' time the University will still be a microcosm of society at large, and will both respond to and initiate changes in the community around it. However the tensions of the past will have given way to a strong social and intellectual community held together not by racial or ethnic bonds but by the core values of the academic estate. The readiness to deal with prejudice has already put a positive spotlight on the institution. This has a direct impact on the number of people (new students, academics, donors) who would want to be associated with the institution, and in turn enables the University to up its game on the academic excellence aspects.

3. **A financially and operationally strong university that lays in store the human and material resources required for financial stability.**

A university that is strong financially and operationally has a strategic advantage that allows it to make the investments needed to position itself favourably as a prime site of higher learning in the 21st century. At the UFS, the imperative for financial stability is amplified by the institutional memory of a financial crisis.

There are several initiatives that have been set in place to support the institutional need for strong finance, including the fundraising drive and the fact that the individual initiatives lend themselves to purposeful fundraising. There are other important drivers to financial stability, one of which is that academic excellence produces more passes, more graduates, more publications, and more postgraduate students. It also creates additional opportunities for donor funding, short courses and professional advice (third stream income). In addition,

the University has developed a tool that facilitates the devolution of decision making down to the point of impact.

True financial strength will come when faculties and programmes are increasingly empowered to make financial decisions. Part of the recurriculation process involves a dramatic reduction in the drivers of cost associated with undergraduate teaching. With the recurriculation comes a tool that allows cost and revenue to be attributed at programme and module level and that allows investments and trade-offs to be made at the lowest organisational level possible.

4. **An effective and efficient service platform for administration and management that is highly regarded among staff, students, parents, alumni, sponsors, government, the private sector, government, international partners, and the community at large.**

The University interface plays a large part in the perception of and therefore the propagation of 'human embrace'. This is captured in the initiative of operational excellence, which includes a culture of service along with doing things correctly the first time, technology support to reduce work and an emphasis on doing the right things and doing them well. However there are many other initiatives to which excellence relates. It enhances and is enhanced by pride in the University, and therefore relates to the interaction of lecturers with undergraduates, the repositioning of student affairs, the campus culture, the accessibility of leaders and the initiatives around diversity and openness.

The way an institution interacts with its customers is deeply symbolic of its attitude; it is shaped by and in turn shapes the culture of the organisation as a whole.

5. **An innovator university in respect of teaching, research and community engagement.**

The University has set itself goals which need innovation to be achieved. As a result it is already marked by distinctiveness among its competitors in terms of doing this differently, doing things boldly, and doing things better than its peers.

The value of "institutional distinctiveness" indeed permeates all initiatives; bold, innovative solutions have been found everywhere in both the Academic and the Human Projects. This will become part of the culture at all levels over the medium term.

6. **A community-linked university.**

The community-linked university will be marked by the University's capacity to successfully bridge and connect especially first-generation learners from disadvantaged areas into higher education in ways that overcome the deficits of poor schooling. The focus of UFS's corporate social investment is education; it is the area in which the University makes a unique contribution.

Education is the University's exclusive community intervention; however a 'community-linked university' is more than this. Free State students will learn the value of public service through both their formal degree studies and voluntary work; the spirit of public service will be a distinguishing feature of its graduates. Furthermore the Human Project itself, once threatened by the fault lines in the extended community, is expected to be seen as exemplar in the communities in which it serves. The University is committed to challenging partisan and parochial thinking and to taking a stand on offensive beliefs and practices.

7. **A top-level institution of choice for the most talented students and for the most gifted academics from across South Africa, the continent and beyond**.

The University is already transforming into a place where student and staff set themselves high standards and expect the same standards of others.

Being a top-level institution and an institution of choice not only attracts the top people; the existing staff also performs better. The uncompromising approach to academic excellence is already paying off. Raising the requirements has increased the demand; students and staff want to be assured of the quality of their peers. This applies to students and staff. Critically it applies to graduate students and young academics, where positions are expected to open up as greater pass rates mean fewer students trapped in the system.

8. **A revitalised university in terms of physical and social infrastructure on all three campuses so that the new and inclusive architecture, buildings, symbols and spaces together create vibrant and interactive communities of staff and students learning and living together**.

Institutional transformation is also reflected in the architecture, buildings, symbols and spaces. The University is committed to retaining the best traditions of the past, yet doing away with symbols and practices that are offensive, and adding new symbols that reflect other traditions that enrich the University community as a whole.

The campus needs new residences, new lecture blocks and offices, and these commitments have been made across all three physical campuses. These will be chosen to create vibrant and interactive communities of staff and students learning and living together.

9. **A deeply transformed university that retains in its staff and student bodies the diversity of campus, community and country**.

Deep transformation implies increasing the intellectual diversity on campus. This will be seen in top scholars from around the world working with and joining the University. It implies a racially diverse staff, but also diversity across other lines, gender, disability and sexual orientation to name a few. Above all the University expects to become a democratised and deracialised community brought together by the academic endeavour.

10. **A student- and staff-centred university distinguished by close and cooperative relationships between leadership and followers such that bridges of trust are built and sustained at all levels of the institution**.

The UFS wants to be known as the university that creates future leaders and as a place where leaders are given the opportunity to grow. To do this, it will create an enabling environment which starts with excellence as a given, a human embrace to differences, and a readiness to look for approaches that are different and better. Such an environment is predicated on trust and on the cooperative relationship between leaders and followers.

Many initiatives have been designed with the humility of leadership in mind. The University and its leaders are there to support the students and the staff. In the University of the Future, leadership at all levels will found itself on trust. In doing so the University will live up to, indeed give meaning to, one of its commitments: "Inspiring Excellence, Transforming Lives".