

# Transforma

June 2005, Volume 1, Issue 3

*Fact sheet of the UFS transformation process/  
Feiteblad van die UV transformasieproses*

Universiteit van die Vrystaat --- University of the Free State --- Yunivesithi ya Freistata

## Sacrifices of UFS staff is the key to success

By Tumi Tabane

"The UFS is committed to transformation and this is seen in the sacrifices and commitments made over a number of years. However, there are still a number of remaining issues, such as addressing the institutional culture, employment equity, management of the satellite campuses, diversity management at student level, management of its public image, and the students success rate," says Mr Billyboy Ramahlele, Director: Diversity and a former co-chairperson of the UFS Transformation Committee.

According to him transformation at the university started in the mid 1980's. This was mainly due to demands from black leadership to admit black students. The university then, through Prof.

Dudley Vermaak and Prof. Kallie Strydom, facilitated discussions with the black community leadership. This produced a pilot programme, Need for Education Elevation and Development, for admission of black students, later known as the Career Preparation Programme.

In 1990 when the university decided to admit black students into its residences Emily Hobhouse became the first hostel to open its doors for black residents, and other hostels followed. In 1993, the university, under the leadership of Prof. Francois Retief, adopted a parallel medium tuition policy, which accelerated the admission of blacks and English-speaking students.

Mr Ramahlele said, "Before this era, black undergra-

duate students had to obtain special permission from the government to study at the UFS but later the university adopted a multi-cultural approach with the intention of promoting diversity in staff and student bodies." In order to facilitate the appointment of black staff members to the university the Council adopted an affirmative action policy and in 1995, with the appointment of new senior managers, the transformation process at the UFS picked up pace.

"The appointment of Prof. Stef Coetzee as rector fast-tracked the political transformation of the university," said Mr Ramahlele. A broad inclusive transformation forum was established which assisted with the transformation of the political image of the university. During this period management was able to establish trust between black and white stakeholders and between management and student bodies. Race relations and human relations improved tremendously and the university earned countrywide respect for its management of multiculturalism and the transformation process.

"However, at the same time the university was faced with financial difficulties. It could not afford maintenance and renovations of its physio-  
*Transformation continues p2...*



**Participate in the transformation process and contact us with your view on these issues:**

Leonie Bolleurs	2707
Anton Fisher	2749
Lacea Loader	2584
Karen Minnaar	3422
Leatitia Pienaar	9188
Hannes Pieterse	3502
Tumi Tabane	2828



*The Transformation team, together for the first time during a workshop held on 14 May 2005.*



...Transformation continue from p1

cal resources, and there was no salary increase for three years. More than 500 staff members, including deans from the different faculties and general workers, lost their jobs through voluntary and compulsory retrenchments. It was then that personnel made sacrifices and committed themselves to nation building and reconciliation and a financial turn around strategy was implemented.

Decision-making processes and structures in the university were transformed, management structures became flatter and inclusive of all the important role players and human relations improved between managers.

Some of the faculties, for example Arts, Education, and Social Sciences had to be merged to form the Faculty of Humanities and later the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Natural Sciences merged to form the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. Some of the support services were outsourced and rationalised with the aim of minimising the running costs at the university.

Mr Ramahlele said, "The financial outcome of this process was very successful



Prof. Lucius Botes, Centre for Development Support and Dr Ezekiel Moraka, Vice rector: Student Affairs enjoying a cup of tea prior to the Transformation Workshop.

and the university was later praised by Mr Nelson Mandela, for its successful handling of difficult societal challenges."

Parallel to this was the academic revitalisation process when the university transformed its academic offerings by developing market related and competitive academic programmes. The concept of academic entrepreneurship was introduced, and resulted in many innovations in the academia. The university experienced growth in research output and an increase in student numbers. The UFS also became the first university to introduce an inte-

grated approach to service learning in South Africa.

"Due to the success of the financial turn around strategy new buildings and facilities were developed which catered for the needs of the UFS clients. This also addressed the diverse nature of the university community including the needs of people with disabilities.

"All this took sacrifice and effort on the part of staff. I think most staff is equally committed to tackling the next transformation phase successfully," says Mr Ramahlele.

## Team builds common vision of task

"The workshop which we held on 14 May was a great success," says Dr Ezekiel Moraka, Vice-rector Student Affairs, and the co-chairperson of the Transformation Plan Team. Though the team is still in a preparatory stage, the workshop enabled the members to develop common goals and approaches.

"In order to find out what

needs to be transformed, why it needs to be transformed and how it must be transformed, five task teams were formed. The different task teams will focus on specific issues such as the language policy, institution culture and values, equity and diversity (of staff and students), students' affairs, governance and management, and academic transformation," says

Prof. Teuns Verschoor, Vice Rector: Academic Operations and also a co-chairperson of the Transformation Plan Team.

According to Dr Moraka, different task teams are expected to give feedback during the next meeting, which will be held on 14 June 2005. This will enable the team to determine the way forward.