

Candidate Statement:

A perspective on the University of the Free State

If appointed, I would be deeply honoured to lead one of South Africa's great universities. The University of the Free State has gained a national reputation for three things: [1] its turnaround strategy in terms of financial stability in a context where external funding has been uncertain; [2] its research strategy which has seen a steady and impressive growth in research outputs (359.65/2004; 410.98/2005; 466.47/2006) in recent years; and [3] its managerial decisiveness in the wake of the Reitz incident, including considered plans for restoring positive race relations on a divided campus.

In the past few months I have had the opportunity of visiting the UFS on different missions, including advising on the impressive *transformation cluster* of the institution, and as a member of the advisory panel of the new Institute for dealing with race and diversity on the campus. I have been impressed by the commitment of staff and students to repositioning the university on the national landscape; I have been moved by the efforts to locate the university within the African continent; I have seen the emphasis on building research capacity among all staff; and I have witnessed the efforts being made to bridge deep divides especially among undergraduate students in residence life at the university.

The challenges at UFS are clear. It has to find a way of integrating classroom life while at the same time ensuring the promotion of Afrikaans, an important cultural trust of the institution, as well as Sesotho and other indigenous languages. It has to bring academic staff, administrative staff, workers, students, as well as the parent community behind a compelling vision of transformation that works in the interest of all members of the university community. And it has to rebuild trust and confidence among students and staff in the mission of the university.

I would like to share *briefly* with the University Council how I would approach these challenges.

First, I am a traditional academic and believe that the core business of a university, if it is to survive in a global knowledge economy, is to be academically competitive. I place a high price on the international standing of a university, and would work tirelessly to ensure that the UFS is placed among the top universities in the world. I have had the privilege of studying and working among the best scholars in my field, and I do believe that with an outstanding team, such international placement and recognition for the UFS should remain at the centre of institutional strategy.

Second, over seven years as Dean of Education at the University of Pretoria, I have learnt how to transform a section of that institution (its largest Faculty, Education) by listening carefully to, and working closely with, white and black staff, students and parents. There was not a single racial incident on the Education Campus during my leadership time there. It should be said, though, that in the process of leading at *Tukkies*, I have been deeply transformed as well, and believe that I am much better prepared as a humanitarian leader to take up the challenges of race and diversity at an institution like UFS with clarity and compassion.

Third, I believe in strong teams and getting the right people on the bus, so to speak. I am conscious of my strengths and even more conscious of my limitations, and for these reasons complementary teams of strong leaders, matter. I am strong in institutional strategy, in engendering trust among staff and students, in building university-community relations (especially with schools and parents), in national fundraising and international grant-making, and in securing competitive placement in the international world of universities. And I enjoy the trust of government and agencies concerned with higher education, such as the Minister of Education and her department; the Council on Higher Education; and the South African Qualifications Authority, to mention only a few.

I look to the team for complementary strengths in budgetary and operational planning (strong campus managers matter); in academic management and student advising (strong registrar functions matter); in human resource management and strategy (strong HR functions are crucial); and in student marketing and recruitment (strong school-university liaison matters).

Finally, I believe that to choose between reparation and reconciliation is a false choice. Both matter. I do not subscribe to a displacement theory of transformation—that to advance one group, another group must necessarily lose. This is the supreme leadership test of our time, in higher education and in the broader society: how to embrace both these national imperatives without losing the focus of either.

In the practice of leadership in higher education, I have learnt how to do this, and would be delighted to be asked to do the same, and much more, for the University of the Free State.

Jonathan D Jansen
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Pretoria