



THEME FOR 2018

“REIMAGINING CUT: EMBRACING SERVANT LEADERSHIP”

INTRODUCTION

From 2012 – 2015, we have focused on the Academic Project, in order to improve the relevance and impact, and enhance the quality of our learning, teaching, research and innovation practices. We have embraced the 2016 theme of *“The Year of Innovation and Entrepreneurship”* with many accolades and achievements – to such an extent that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) recently indicated that the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) is *“the leader in the country pertaining to interventions in innovation and entrepreneurship”*. The theme for 2017 was *“The Year of the Human Project”*, focusing on staff, students and other stakeholders, and enhancing the human reconciliation drive. A number of outcomes were achieved in 2017, as shared in my communiqué of 15 December 2017.

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The following special project for the next five years was approved at the Management Lekgotla held on 29 and 30 September 2017: ***“Reimagining CUT as a transformative University and ‘model’ UoT in Africa, impacting on the socio-economic development of the Central region of South Africa and beyond”***. This project, founded on our transformation drive and new institutionalism (change), consists of the following ten focus areas:

- ❖ Focus area 1: Reimagining CUT as a transformative University.
- ❖ Focus area 2: Academic excellence promoting entrepreneurial education.
- ❖ Focus area 3: Pockets of world-class research programmes.
- ❖ Focus area 4: “Model”, vibrant innovation ecosystem in Africa.
- ❖ Focus area 5: Engagement and partnerships nationally and internationally (incl. alumni).
- ❖ Focus area 6: A sustainable and well-equipped University (smart green campuses and digital transformation).
- ❖ Focus area 7: Institutional culture of caring and safety towards holistic development (Human Project Stage 2).
- ❖ Focus area 8: Effective and efficient administration and governance.
- ❖ Focus area 9: Financial sustainability (running the University as a business).
- ❖ Focus area 10: Image of CUT as a University: branding, marketing and communication.

It was agreed that the 2018 theme should link with the 2017 theme of *“The Year of the Human Project”*. Furthermore, that we retain the prefix “reimagining CUT” to the annual theme for the next five years. Therefore, the notion of a servant leader is introduced. It is argued that all our staff members and students are leaders in some way or another. In the words of Robert Greenleaf, *“it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first”*.

Servant leadership is a philosophy and set of practices that enrich the lives of individuals, build better organisations, and ultimately create a more just and caring world. It is a blend and balance between leader and servant. You do not lose leadership qualities when you become a servant leader; instead, you are leading with others in mind.

The following are qualities of the servant leader (Skip Prichard, 2013):

- ❖ **Values diverse opinions:** A servant leader values everyone's contributions, and regularly seeks opinions. If you must parrot back the leader's opinion, you are not in a servant-led organisation.
- ❖ **Cultivates a culture of trust:** People do not meet at the water cooler to gossip. A culture of trust exists at the institution.
- ❖ **Develops other leaders:** The replication factor is of utmost importance. It means teaching others to lead, providing opportunities for growth, and demonstrating by example. That means the leader does not always lead, but instead gives up power and deputises others to lead.
- ❖ **Helps people with life issues** (not just work issues): It is important to offer opportunities for personal development beyond the job. E.g. running a company weight loss programme, a programme on decreasing personal debt, or a class on etiquette. Although none of these may address an immediate corporate need, each may be important. Servant leaders care about people's lives, not just about their jobs.
- ❖ **Encourages:** The hallmark of a servant leader is encouragement. Also, a true servant leader says, "Let's go do it," not, "You go do it".
- ❖ **Sells instead of tells:** A servant leader is the opposite of a dictator. His/her leadership style focuses on persuading, not commanding. Servant leaders sell and persuade where others command and control.
- ❖ **Thinks "you", not "me":** There is a selfless quality about a servant leader. Someone who only asks "How does this benefit me?" is disqualified.
- ❖ **Thinks long term:** A servant leader thinks about the next generation, the next leader, the next opportunity. Hence, there is a tradeoff between what is important today versus what would be important tomorrow, and choices are made to benefit the future. Servant leaders sacrifice some today to develop more for tomorrow.
- ❖ **Acts with humility:** The leader does not wear a title as a way to show who is in charge, does not think he/she is better than everyone else, and acts in a caring way towards others. He/she may, in fact, pick up the trash or clean up a table. Setting an example of service, the servant leader understands that it is not about the leader, but about others.

CONCLUSION

Let us, as the CUT family, embrace this theme in 2018 in order to instill a culture of servant leadership!

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant" –
Robert L Stevenson.