



Central University of
Technology, Free State



STEPS TO STRIDES:

IN THE ACADEMIC CORE OF THE UNIVERSITY



THE STATE-OF-THE-UNIVERSITY ADDRESS 2014

The State-of-the-University Address (SoUA) was delivered by Professor Thandwa Mthembu, Vice-Chancellor & Principal on:

- 6 February 2014 at Welkom Campus; and
- 8 February 2014 at Bloemfontein Campus.

The video of the Bloemfontein Campus SoUA 2014 is available on CUT's YouTube Channel, visit www.cut.ac.za

CONTENT

Introduction	1
20 Years of Democracy	3
Achievements and Challenges	5
2010 to 2013	5
Building a strong foundation	5
Remaining Challenges	5
Looking Ahead: Achievements and Challenges	7
2014 to 2017	7
PLANNING to Succeed	7
PRODUCT - from steps to strides	8
Our PEOPLE with Crazy Ideas	13
PENNIES and pound-wise	18
Vision 2020: Delivering Socio-Economic Development	22
Conclusion	25

INTRODUCTION



A university assembly is a special occasion at a university. Unlike graduation ceremonies, for example, this particular one brings together the entire CUT family and stakeholders – students, parents, guardians, sponsors, leaders of business/industry, leaders of government and civil society, lecturers, professors and support staff. It brings them together to officially open Central University of Technology, Free State. This is a university where people “*think beyond ... the box*”. When people say something is a “*cut above the rest*”, the word “cut” is undoubtedly CUT!

More important is that, unlike many universities, CUT also uses this occasion to publicly present our major objectives for each year. The year 2014 is the start of the mid-term of our Vision 2020, and it requires stretch objectives that will cover this period.

I wish to address a special word of welcome to our students and their parents/guardians/families/sponsors. We celebrate with you today your entry into university education. We are here to assist you in this learning process, and we wish to see you flourish here at CUT and anywhere else you will find yourself after graduating in 3 years, or if you have come to do other things, in 4,5,6 years!

May you grow from strength to strength and accomplish all that you have set your mind to here at CUT. It will require determination, self-discipline, hard work and diligence, amongst other values. It is indeed one of the most important steps that anyone could take in preparing themselves for success in life henceforth. Remember the cliché, “*knowledge is power*”. You have just started the process of empowering yourself, through your studies, to become the best that you can be! We embrace you as part of our family, and we are looking forward to assist you in your journey of life-long learning.



You will have opportunities here to develop not only intellectually, but socially as well. There will be lots of support to your intellectual, moral, spiritual, emotional and physical health. The new building just in front of this hall and the Lapeng Centre to the west of it are dedicated to a host of student support services in all the areas I have mentioned. You will have absolutely no reason to succumb to alcohol, drunken bashes, sex orgies that go viral, drugs, HIV/Aids and the like.

Like many of the staff members seated here behind me and many in the audience who studied engineering, hotel and tourism management, graphic design, photography and fine arts, clinical technology or radiography right here, you will be a leader in the field of your choice.

Like Os du Randt and André Venter who studied here, some of you will be great rugby players. In fact, we are the current champion of the Varsity Shield Rugby Competition. On Monday, 27 January, the UKZN Impis were sent packing down the Drakensberg after they got beaten.

CUT punches much above its weight. The four other universities we compete against – UKZN, TUT, Fort Hare and UWC – have a total of about 300 years of life and experience. But, we beat them hands-down every time. UWC is coming on Monday, 10 February, to be served their staple diet. Come and watch it happen!



Varsity Shield 2013 Champions

One of our own, Trevor Nyakane, played for the Springboks last year, against Italy. Seabelo Senatla and Chris Dry are playing for the Springbok 7-a-side team in Wellington, New Zealand this weekend.

Like Nicky Bojé, who studied here, some of you will become great cricket players. No doubt, the CUT cricket team is the regional champion in cricket. Dean Elgar is in the Proteas cricket team squad for the coming test series against Australia that starts next Wednesday.

Who remembers Zola Budd, one of the greatest distance runners of our country? Like she had a taxi named after her, you may just have the Gautrain renamed after you!

Just one other good thing about CUT, more especially to the new students and their parents/guardians: The city of Bloemfontein provides a very stable and calm environment. But, the location of CUT's Bloemfontein Campus does that even more.

To the **west**, just outside the university's main gate, is the Park Road police station. Should anything untoward happen to a student, we do not even have to call the police, we just shout out loud and they walk in and deal with whatever the problem is. This was demonstrated spectacularly on Monday, 3 February 2014, when a group of about 30 or so students got over-excited and attempted, without much success, to disrupt late registrations and classes.

To the **east** of the campus are two churches – the Catholic and Anglican Cathedrals – that provide almost on-site spiritual and moral care to all of us. Whilst you are in class or writing an examination, you can easily overhear prayers and feel the Holy Spirit engulfing you into passing your examination. This is our big secret: perhaps as a result of this, we have one of the highest pass rates in our sector!

So, once we have strayed away from our godly ways from churches to the east, and the discipline from the police to the west has been exercised, to the **north** are courts, including the Supreme Court, that we just walk to when there are issues that require pronouncement of guilt or innocence. Depending on how the internal processes go,

we might just find ourselves there with the 10 students we suspended on Monday, 3 February 2014, for disrupting university processes.

There are people who do not study on time; bash their evenings away; and, they then try to cram a whole year's work a few days before the examinations. Sometimes, some screws come off in their heads. Don't worry. To the **south** of the campus, is the psychiatric hospital that quickly deals with such cases. So, the Bloemfontein Campus is very secure whether you go east, west, north or south. Welcome to CUT!

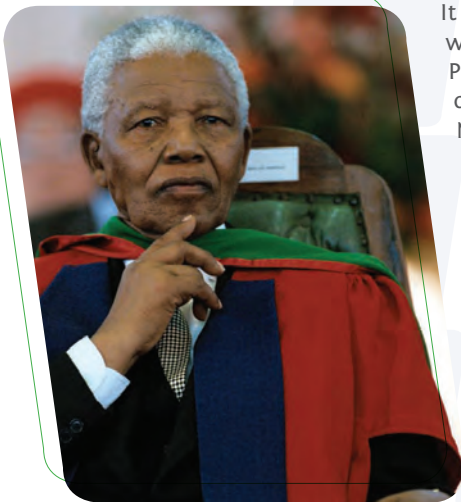
20 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY



I should begin my address by taking you back to a perfect day in our history as South Africans. Almost 20 years ago, on 27 April 1994, South Africa cast aside centuries of discrimination and oppression to form a new society built on the foundation of freedom and democracy.

We are, therefore, gathered here today not only for us to reflect on the achievements of our 33-year-old young university, but also to cherish this most significant moment in our country's history. We are gathered here to appreciate the impact of that significant moment in the transformation of higher education. The year 2014, therefore, presents an opportunity for the people of South Africa, the continent and the rest of the world to join us in celebrating the South African story.

The most famous fighter for our freedom is, of course, the late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. We will forever cherish his memory as we remain inspired by his courage in helping us to create a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous nation. His contribution in advancing the cause of education remains invaluable.



It was a singular proud moment in our own history when in 2001, after he stepped down from being President of the country, the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) conferred on Mr Mandela the Doctor of Technology in Education (*honoris causa*) degree. I must emphasise the fact that our experience of democratic freedom has led us as an academic community along an eventful and transformative path; one which you might say has changed the higher education landscape completely in so many ways. The recent changes in the higher education act, signed into law in December 2012, although retrogressive, were clearly precipitated by the stand we took as a university against unwarranted ministerial interference. This caused the whole sector to notice and rise up.

As part of this national transformation agenda following the democratic transition, CUT was established as a fully fledged university of technology in 2004, through the amalgamation of the former Technikon Free State and Welkom campus of Vista University. Thus, as much as we are 33 years old as an academic institution, we are only 10 years old as a university of technology, which is quite young for a university.



The change in designation to a university of technology (UoT) compelled us to rethink our position as a UoT fit for purpose. This meant that, amongst other things, CUT had to revise its plans, policies, rules, regulations, constitutions and manuals. These include the university's planning cycle, our strategic plan, including our annual Operational Plan, a new SRC Constitution, a new language policy, a revised admissions policy, the transformation vision document, the equity and excellence position and the Leadership Charter. In 2010, Council approved a new vision statement we call Vision 2020 and its associated plans.

For those who are unfamiliar with Vision 2020, it simply states that:

“By 2020, Central University of Technology shall be an engaged university that focuses on producing quality social and technological innovations in socio-economic development, primarily in the Central region of South Africa.”

There is no doubt in our minds that we can attain this vision. After all, the famous American author, Ralph Waldo Emerson, very eloquently pointed out that:

“We are limited, not by our abilities, but by our vision.”

Our vision pushes us beyond the boundaries of what we thought was possible. It has made us *“think beyond ... the box”* as we seek to become a *“CUT above the rest”!*

ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES



2010 to 2013

The year 2014 is both an end and a beginning. It is the end of the 1st phase: 2010 to 2013 of our implementation of Vision 2020, and the beginning of the second phase: 2014 to 2017 of taking *strides in our academic core*.

I am, therefore, going to do two things today almost simultaneously. I will take you back through our achievements and challenges of the first phase: 2010 to 2013. Thereafter, I will take strides forward with you into the next implementation phase: 2014 to 2017. I will identify the challenges CUT will work hard to meet during this phase, with a special focus on the year 2014.

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

Based on the university's strategic plan, the theme for this year's SoUA is: From STEPS to STRIDES in the academic core of the university. Over and above what we have already done, the academic core needs to be consolidated and embedded much more for CUT to be the great and competitive university it wishes to be. The academic core will always have to get special attention in everything we do. It is our lifeblood.

The theme has the word "STEPS". For us, the word "STEPS" stands for "*Strategic Transformation of Educational Programmes and Structures*". It is about the steps that we took between 2010 and 2012 to re-imagine our curricula. We shall hear more about this later. For us, the word "STRIDES" stands for "*Strategic Implementation and Development of our Entrepreneurial Systems*". Thanks to Prof. Ryk Lues, our champion, for our many "crazy ideas" and for inspiring us to invent this new meaning to the word.

Since especially 2010, we have made a number of advances. As mentioned above, our strategic plan identifies the first phase of implementation as the period 2010 to 2013. This phase has been about "*building a strong and solid foundation*" for CUT to prosper in all respects.

However, there remain four (4) grand challenges we have to face squarely into the second phase: 2014-17 of our advancement as a university:

REMAINING CHALLENGES

Grand Challenge 1: *Consolidation and embedding:* how do we consolidate and/or maintain and/or mainstream the foundations we have built, so that we do not recede into mediocrity whilst we continue to think we are making strides during this phase;

Grand Challenge 2: *Relevance, excellence and quality:* how do we assure the relevance, excellence and quality of our entire suite of academic programme offerings, much

beyond what we did between 2010 and 2012, so that we remain a credible and respectable university;

Grand Challenge 3: *Research and innovation*: Related to the above challenge, how do we enhance our research and innovation outputs and become more competitive in the sector, so that we remain worthy of the name: university;

Grand challenge 4: *Outcomes and impact (in broader society)*: Having consolidated our foundations; having made our programme offerings relevant, excellent and of great quality; and, having enhanced our research and innovation outputs, how do we realise the necessary outcomes in the broader societal development arena, be it social, economic or environmental. How do we reassert our institutional legitimacy and even hegemony as a university in this society.

As I report on our achievements and help to chart the way forward, I will keep these challenges in mind and give a sense of what we shall do to meet them.

PLANNING

ACHIEVEMENTS

As noted above, as part of the first phase: 2010-13 of implementation, we committed to “*building a strong and solid foundation*”. This meant that, first and foremost, a substantial amount of **PLANNING** and implementation of our organisational redesign and systems had to be done. We resuscitated the planning function, introduced a new planning regime, together with evaluation, monitoring and performance management systems. We revised a number of our policies and systems and introduced a three-tier policy system in order to appropriately, devolve authority from Council down the system.

We re-organised the *Academic Planning Unit* for it to focus on academe; and, for broader university planning, we set up the *Strategy Execution Unit (SEU)*, not only to help us to devise and refine our plans and strategies, but to help to execute them, too.

We initiated a number of projects, new structures and units: such as the *CUT Innovation Services (CUTis)* and the *Diversified Income Project (DIP)*. CUTis is a Trust dedicated mainly to the commercialisation of our Intellectual Property (IP). It works as an independent business entity to cut the red tape and the bureaucracy of the university; *Sustainability@CUT* is a project that leads our efforts towards education for sustainable development and environmentally friendly use of our perishable resources; the *Higher Education Leadership Skills Academy (HELSKA)* is for specialised training and advancement of staff and our graduates; the *Schools Advancement Academy (SAA)* coordinates all our school-focused development

projects; the *Free State IT Hub* is meant to turn the Free State into an IT hub in software development; a revamped *Marketing and Communications Section* is in place; a new *International Office* is in place - the list is long.

Having done all of these without necessarily asking for any new funding from the university reserves, but simply by being efficient with the revenue we earn from year to year, we have some **challenges of consolidation and embedding** with respect to these somewhat disparate initiatives.

We have to meet these challenges during this second phase: 2014 to 2017.

LOOKING AHEAD: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

2014 to 2017

PLANNING to Succeed

- The main idea behind strategic projects was that, as projects that emanate from fresh, unorthodox and crazy ideas, they would be incubated for a short period. And, once robust systems would have been developed around them, they would be mainstreamed. This has not happened with quite a number of these projects.
- Thus, a number of systems will have to be developed so that there will be more clarity about their operations as they get mainstreamed. Mainstreaming shall mean, amongst others, consolidation of these projects within related departments or sections. Some of them will be culled to ensure they live within the means we have, or simply out-phased in order for us to focus on what works much better.
- In 2014, all of these projects mentioned above will collectively cost the university about R28 million. This is in addition to our normal headline budget of about R550 million on run-of-the-mill operations, capital expenditure and salaries, including activities related to the ones mentioned above. Hopefully, these projects will require much less over the rest of the years in the period as some of them begin to produce their own revenue.



PRODUCTS - from steps to strides

I have been dealing with our **PLANNING** and foundational initiatives. I should now move on to our **PRODUCTS**. Our products, by the way, are not our students. Products are things that people produce. Students are people who, together with our academics and researchers, innovate, co-create and co-produce our products in the laboratories and in the classrooms.

During the period up to 2012, we reviewed our academic **PRODUCTS**. Our academics conceptualised, designed and produced nine (9) new innovative programmes in a number of fields that the 21st century demands we must focus on, such as renewable energy, agriculture and food safety, water management, studio art and design, education, health management, community development work, sustainability and so forth.

The broad-based and organic initiative we embarked on to produce all these programmes was called the *Strategic Transformation of Educational Programmes and Structures (STEPS)* process. Yes, remember our steps to strides? STEPS, which actually commenced in 2010, has been key in transforming our curriculum to ensure that it meets the requirements of the 21st century. Our curricula in the fields mentioned above are now demand-driven and user-oriented, and therefore responsive to societal needs.

We are extremely thrilled about the approval by DHET of these new academic programmes in 2013. Of these, the following four (4) have been accredited by the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and registered by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), and will be offered in 2014:

- Higher Certificate in Renewable Energy Technologies;
- Advanced Diploma in Agricultural Extension;
- Diploma in Studio Art;
- Bachelor in Radiography.



PRODUCTS

In addition to these, we are in the process of introducing work-integrated learning (WIL) in all our programmes. Further, we have introduced a core curriculum that should help all CUT students get a broad-based understanding of important fields of academic endeavour and prepare them to be broad-minded, creative, innovative, productive, and versatile graduates.

With the STEPS project and many other curriculum development initiatives, the relevance, excellence and quality of our academic programmes have improved appreciably. A number of our programmes, especially engineering programmes, are accredited by professional organisations. Some of those organisations have commented thus about them and CUT:

Steve Lyons, Registrar of the SACQSP, a quantity surveying professional organisation, had this to say in 2013: "CUT is currently the best UoT in QS in SA".

In its accreditation report on a number of engineering programmes, the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) had this to say in 2012: "...the first time since 2008 that a Civil Engineering Programme obtained an outright accreditation during a single visit..."



With regards to student throughput, the overall CUT success rate continues to improve, and in 2012 it exceeded the DHET target of 75%, reaching 77%. Remember our big secret from the east of us? In 2012, the total CUT graduation headcount was 3 159 – thus exceeding the target of 2 650 set by DHET. Indeed, it has been confirmed that CUT has the best graduation rate of the six UoTs.

The 2005 book by Jim Collins entitled: *“Good to Great”* was made to be my bible by Council when I joined CUT in 2007. I felt like I was going to be examined on its ideas and principles just when I started. One of the things Collins says, which may even have become a cliché by now, is that:

“Good is the enemy of great”.

To us, this means you just cannot afford to rest on your laurels because of your past or present glory and of being known to be good; lest, others begin to overtake you whilst you frolic vainly in self-congratulation. Today’s greatest individual or institution may easily be tomorrow’s mediocre, and even the worst, when competitors begin to devise innovative means to be better than great.

Thus, having embarked on all these teaching and learning development processes and received accolades, the perennial **grand challenge of relevance, excellence and quality**, and to some extent that of **consolidation and embedding** in the totality of our academic programmes (or PQM), is one that we should meet urgently during the next phase: 2014 to 2017.

- During the STEPS process, we identified a number of programmes that are either sub-optimal; are not delivered to meet the needs of the market or are plain out-dated and need to be out-phased. From the year 2014, we need to work harder on doing just this to clean up our PQM.
- A lot has been done by the Academic Planning Unit, which also manages our quality assurance system, to ensure that regular reviews of our programmes are done each year. From 2014, we need to align our standards of assessment and judgement on the relevance, excellence and quality of our programmes across the board along the lines of the STEPS process or any other better approach.
- There needs to be a special focus on what we call the Welkom Campus’s PQM. With added infrastructure that we have begun to put in place, to what extent could we expand and/or re-align programmes at this campus so that they are responsive to the environment, demand-driven and user oriented?

- As a university of technology, how technological is the education we provide from the library, to humanities and to engineering? How could the education we provide be more easily accessible, not only to the 13 500 or so registered contact students mainly, but to the working adult in the Central region that wants to improve his/her level of education, and become a 21st-century knowledge worker?
- With a sizable number of part-time lecturers, we cannot easily increase our research and innovation outputs and assure the quality of our academic programmes. We need to examine this practice and only retain those who have unique industry-related contributions to make.
- We have challenges in maintaining the shape of our university as a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)-focused university at close to 50% of our student body by 2020. There are other universities of technology that are close to, or are already at this proportion. Yes, we need to get an adequate supply of qualified high school graduates into these programmes. You will hear more later on in this speech about our initiatives in this area through the Schools Advancement Academy.

In 2014, all of these initiatives in teaching and learning will cost us about R7.5 million to drive them strategically. In addition to this amount, the headline budget of R550 million on regular operations, capital expenditure and salaries, including activities related to this field of teaching and learning, will allow those initiatives to continue to run in parallel.

In addition to teaching and learning and community engagement, research and innovation is the third pillar of our mission as a university.

It distinguishes a university from any other further or higher education institution.

We have seen improvements in our research outputs. CUT recorded an increase of 20% in research outputs in 2012, compared to 2011. You will hopefully be pleased to know that at 28% of our permanent staff, CUT has the highest percentage of staff with doctoral degrees amongst universities of technology.

Thanks to our partners, our total external research income exceeded R7.6 million for 2013. This helped greatly to scale up our research outputs.

Having quoted all these interesting figures, our **grand challenge in research and innovation** remains the following:

- Relative to our competitors, our research and innovation outputs have not increased competitively, even though we have the largest cohort of

lecturers with PhDs. We need “crazy ideas” and innovations to ensure that our research outputs are commensurate with the high qualifications we boast.

- The majority of our outputs are not in the bosom of the broad field of STEM that we should be known for.
- As a university of technology, our ultimate outputs should be innovations, not just research outputs for the sake of novelty. We need to churn innovations out there in the socio-economic development arena and help to improve the quality of life of our people. The number of patents and other similar outputs is still low.
- We have the challenge of having more than a fair share of junior academic staff that would not be capable of leading research and innovation projects. We thus need to recruit even internationally, but ensure that we have systems and incentives to do so successfully. For one of our prized centres, the Centre for Rapid Prototyping and Manufacturing, we have recently recruited a professor from France. In Finance, Accounting and Operations Management, we have recruited a professor from the U.K. In Computer Sciences and Information Technology, we have recently recruited a UCT PhD graduate who used to be a lecturer at the University of Nairobi. The Dean of Engineering and IT originally comes from Tanzania. There are more of these internationals. We should not frown upon such appointments when we need to add more diversity, quantity and quality to the expertise we already have. We want to create a world-class university.

In 2014, we have about R7.5 million allocated to give impetus to our research and innovation project. This is over and above what our headline budget of R550 million provides for operations in research and innovation, including salaries and capital expenditure and activities related to this set of activities. Together with the R7.5 million quoted earlier for teaching and learning, the total additional allocation to academe will be about R15 million. We are still in the process of finding more funds for teaching and learning and research and innovation.

Our PEOPLE with Crazy Ideas

To build and strengthen our foundations, to conceptualise, design and deliver innovative programmes in teaching and learning, research and innovation, we need **PEOPLE**. The question, therefore, is what CUT has done, and will do, to align its human resources accordingly towards Vision 2020.

Whilst in the past the university had an academic to support staff expenditure ratio of 49:51 in favour of support staff; as of 2014 this stands at 61:39 in favour of academe. This shows that we are spending more resources in support of our core business of teaching and learning, research and innovation, and engagement. We did this through a very painful, but ultimately gainful, process of abolishing a number of support staff positions, and through retrenchments. This allowed the creation of about 60 new academic posts since 2009.

In addition, the academic structure has been revised. A more nimble two-tier system, comprising of deans and Heads of Departments (HoDs), was implemented in 2013. Currently, 21 of the 22 HoDs positions are filled on a permanent basis, with 20 of them held by academics with PhDs.

We paid a lot more attention to encouraging and supporting a transformative institutional culture that encourages our **PEOPLE** to be transformative, creative, innovative and productive; to deliberate and participate meaningfully in the life of our university; and to engage meaningfully with business/industry, government and the broader society in what we call quad-helix partnerships. Ultimately, the quality of any institution is as good as the knowledge, innovations, quality and skills of its **PEOPLE**, in our case mainly our students and staff; and, of course, our stakeholders and partners.

Fostering a culture of dialogue, deliberation, respect for logic and the rule of law, excellence, diligence, discipline and diversity remains a priority for us. The university initiated several institutional forums for engagements (for example, public lecture series, workshops, knowledge-sharing sessions and Vision 2020 road shows). A number of communication strategies were introduced; for example, the Vice-Chancellor's and executives' communiqués and Council reports to the university community. Other forms of communication, which are externally-oriented, such as the Gratia and Annual Reports, have also been enhanced.

In 2012, we established an A-Team, which consists of more than 50 staff members and students who contribute their "crazy ideas" towards the advancement of Vision 2020. For example, the A-Team cluster on Talent Management, consisting

of two groups – one from the academe and another from support services – is now playing an active role in the recruitment process to assist the whole university to identify the best talent. We believe A-people, who have nothing to prove about their capabilities, attract other A-people. A B-person, who has much less to show, will attract a C or a D-person so that the B- person could then display his/her relative worth.

The Aesthetics Cluster of the A-Team has made substantial progress towards the creation of a world-class campus environment. The cluster is currently implementing an Artefacts Project on the Bloemfontein campus, and you may have noticed as you came into the campus the sculptures by the renowned South African sculptor, Uwe Pfaff.



Leonard Thuto, now towers over Park Road entrance. The meaning of the word Thuto is: education.

Some of the strategic initiatives mentioned earlier, such as the Higher Education Leadership Skills Academy (HELSKA), Talent Management, the performance management system, and many others are meant to develop our younger academics, support staff and students. And, once so developed, they will have more capacity to make CUT a great university.

An institutional climate survey was professionally conducted in August/September 2013. I quote directly from the executive summary of the report:

“Staff were significantly positive overall (83%) with regard to the work being meaningful (Academic 82% and Support (84%). Also, they reported very positively (72%) on their work being challenging (Academic 70% and Support 74%).

The report reflects a situation which falls in the DEVELOPMENTAL area, and although it is a slightly positive overall picture, it is in need of developmental attention to improve on what already exists.

Some areas as highlighted (especially opportunity for promotion) need focused intervention to address these areas to rectify any shortcomings as necessary.

The areas rated as very positive (especially finding work meaningful and that it contributes to the overall objectives of CUT) are indications of sound practices, and contribute to a success recipe for the Central University of Technology's future growth.”

At CUT we value our students, and support them to the best of our abilities to ensure that they are able to perform at their peak. Many of our students face an array of challenges – from financial limitations to the absence of a firm support base at home. Upon joining the university, some of our students find it difficult to adapt to the demands of studying at a university, while others simply struggle with home sickness. Whatever the case, we have the necessary support infrastructure and capable personnel to help our students adjust to the challenges of university life.

In our efforts to ensure that our students are receiving the best support, the Student Mentorship Programme has been introduced in three faculties as a strategic intervention. The aim of this programme is to provide students with a

supportive environment that will motivate and assist them to develop to their maximum personal and academic potential. It provides a framework for positive interaction between students, mentors and lecturing staff. It also creates an atmosphere that helps especially first-year students to understand and manage the challenges of campus life.

Academic assistance to students is by no means limited to the faculties. Student Wellness and Academic Development and Support have various programmes in place to help to develop the potential of our young people.

What is a university without its sport and recreation! Well, our teams performed considerably well during 2013. The CUT Rugby Team (the Ixias) did us proud by winning the Varsity Shield Cup held in April 2013, and we've started 2014 on a high note by beating the UKZN Impis.

Our Football Team won the Castle League, and was promoted to the Vodacom League. Another significant achievement was from CUT's Golf Team, that won the USSA Golf Tournament at Koro Creek.

Apart from sports, there are other extra-curricular activities that our students immersed themselves in last year. In August 2013, the CUT Choir obtained first position in the Lengau Choral Association Competition held in Bethlehem. The CUT Dance Society obtained first, second, third and fifth positions in Level One Ballroom Dance; first position in Levels Two and Three Ballroom Dance; and first and second positions in the All-ladies section for the Open Queen's Birthday Dance Sports Competition in June 2013. Let us congratulate all the teams, the coaches and the sports administrators that performed so well in 2013.

Without a doubt, CUT is one of the leading sports-oriented universities in this country. I hope our students will make 2014 an even more successful year!

All of the above notwithstanding, from two of our grand challenges, namely **consolidation and embedding** and **impact and outcomes**, we have the following specific challenges relating to our **PEOPLE**:

- Too many of our people remain cynical, inactive and, if active, not so proactive, and if proactive, not so productive. The attitude from amongst some is perhaps that CUT belongs to Management or in particular Mthembu; or the latter are the only ones who should set things in motion.

So, some will fold their arms until instructed to do something to make this a better university.

- The programmes we have put in place to develop our people have yet to produce broad-ranging and unequivocal outcomes, mainly because they are small relative to the vast needs. We need to find partners from business/industry, government and broader society that could support us more in order to deepen and broaden these programmes.
- Projects that should make people feel they belong and change their attitudes so they begin to be proud of CUT academically, administratively, aesthetically and otherwise, require consolidation and embedding, and even new innovation.
- Students must get more and more involved in the life of the university; not only in sport and recreation and, of course, in their classes. In this very opening ceremony, they could have been showcasing their talents instead of having parents just sitting there listening to a boring speech! We need more innovations on how we could embed student activities in everything we do, and turn as many of our students into avid participants in sport, wellness activities and many other initiatives.

In 2014, we have allocated a total of about R14.5 million on PEOPLE-related projects. Again, this is in addition to funds in our headline budget of about R550 million that caters for many other related activities that benefit our people professionally.

There is much we could do without money. But, there is so much we can achieve with money (or what we call here at CUT, PENNIES) being available. Above, I have alluded to what our normal operational budget is and what additional amounts from our Strategic Development Fund we have allocated to kick-start or embed deeper a number of our strategic and turn-key initiatives.

PENNIES and pound-wise

I must say confidently that at CUT we are “*penny-wise and also pound-wise*”, not pound-foolish as they normally say. Through setting a number of parameters over the years, we have re-focused our available resources, human and otherwise, to make them work towards achieving Vision 2020.

The painful but gainful restructuring exercise I referred to earlier enabled us to drastically reduce the salary budget, thus allowing us to dedicate more resources to what matters most – the academic project. We never fail to pay our staff! I know from the climate survey that our staff feel they could be paid better and earn better benefits. Well, if we all innovate and work together towards the common good rather than for individual gain, we could certainly earn more revenue and pay more. But, where are your innovations?

Over the years, the salary budget has shrunk from almost 75% in 2006/7 to 61.96% in 2014, which is within the reasonable limits set by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). You may have heard of some universities who spend almost all their revenue on salaries, and even then begin to struggle to pay their people. Never at CUT!

In the area of student financial matters, there are increasingly shriller voices from amongst students that demand more financial aid from government (NSFAS) and from universities. From essentially the revenue we collect from students, CUT allocated R15 million for 2014 back to the students to assist those who are excellent and deserving.

In 2013, we also found innovative ways to deal with the NSFAS funding crisis whilst negotiations had been on-going about this with the DHET and the NSFAS Office. For these reasons, we never had problems at the beginning of the year with our students regarding NSFAS. We welcome a recent announcement that students with debts from 2013 will be funded to the tune of about R24 million. Thanks to DHET and NSFAS!

In 2013, strategic and operational financial management continued to improve. We obtained a clean (unqualified) audit from our external auditors for the financial year 2012. We have been obtaining such clean audits for as long as I can remember, but certainly since I started at CUT in 2007. In fact, for the 2011 financial results, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, the Honourable Dr Blade Nzimande, wrote the following to congratulate us in his letter dated 27 August 2013:

“I would like to thank the University for submitting the annual report by 30 June 2012, as required in terms of the Regulations for Annual Reporting by Higher Education Institutions.

I have noted the following:

The unqualified audit opinion received by the University from its external auditors... I wish the Council and the University well in continuing to fulfil its academic and public mandate and ensuring a financially sound institution.”

Remember that the financial maladministration that had been alleged, and for which an independent assessor came to investigate in March 2012, was in respect of the financial year 2011 and before. Please note that the Honourable Minister congratulates Council and the university for “ensuring a financially sound institution”.

In a bid to further improve on the management of our financial resources, we developed a Resources Allocation Model (RAM) in 2013. RAM will ensure a more efficient allocation of resources, and also strengthen the linkage between planning and budgeting. The model was thoroughly researched and benchmarked in 2013, and is ready for implementation this year in the academic division, with full implementation to be completed as the year 2015 starts.

Since 2009 we have been working hard to improve our infrastructure. In 2012 and early 2013, we completed our first building phase of six (6) new buildings, two of which are at the Welkom campus. For the Welkom campus, these two buildings are the first two brick and mortar buildings since 1996 or so – that is 18 years since then, and about 27 years since that campus was established and managed as a Vista University campus.



Teacher Education Building

With regard to infrastructure, in my speech in February 2013, I announced:

For the period 2012-2015, thanks to DHET, the Minister and our Council's contribution, a further R314 million is to be invested in more academic infrastructure:

- From the R314 million, a total of R151.9 million will go towards academic and residential buildings and bulk infrastructure at the Welkom campus; a total of R154.6 million will go towards academic and residential buildings at the Bloemfontein campus;
- From the R154.6 million earmarked for the Bloemfontein campus, a total of R110.9 million will go towards academic infrastructure in the fields of Engineering, Health and Environmental Sciences and Teacher Education;
- R3 million to an infrastructure audit, and R4 million towards the appointment of experts to assist us with the development processes;
- At the Welkom campus, student residences will be built to the tune of R73.4 million, whilst at the Bloemfontein campus, R43.7 million worth of student residences will be built;
- Subject to finalisation of designs, the new residences are expected to provide for around 500 sprinkling new beds at the Welkom campus, which currently does not have a single residence. This will leapfrog Welkom campus's accommodation rate to 25% of its student population. At the Bloemfontein campus, an additional 250 beds will be constructed, a 36% increase after many years of no additional student accommodation. This will increase the bed availability rate at this campus from about 6% to just below 10%;
- With respect to student residences, through a PPP process we have already initiated, we will continue to leverage the allocation we have to further increase the bed availability rate at CUT.

This is not the end of CUT's development. There are types of infrastructure that DHET does not easily fund, in Management Sciences and Humanities, especially the former. Yet, we have an excellent Hotel School undoubtedly, one of the best in the country.

You may ask: what happened since February 2013 when I announced the infrastructure plans I have referred to above?

By 28 February 2013, we had submitted our detailed plans and building sketches for final approval by the DHET. In March/April 2013, we started the process of procuring a professional team of architects, quantity surveyors and the like to produce more detailed designs. The Lead Professional Consultant came on board in July 2013, and appointed the rest of the professional team that has been working on these since about October 2013. The Lead Consultant has also been

working on the Campus Master Plans for both Bloemfontein and Welkom, which should be ready for submission to the DHET in June 2014.

We are now in the process of procuring a panel of construction companies, so that ground could be broken around May 2014. As stated earlier, these infrastructure projects must be completed by December 2015.

The provision of world-class infrastructure remains very high on our agenda. With regards to infrastructure and facilities management, CUT's achievements are worthy of praise, as our university is, I'm proud to say, one of the best-maintained universities in the country.

In addition to the figures quoted above regarding infrastructure, in 2014, we have allocated about R33.6 million for various refurbishments, infrastructure-related projects such as online academic and administrative systems, integrated security, wireless networks and so forth. The Welkom Campus Development Fund of about R3.3 million is included in this amount.

All of the above notwithstanding, from amongst our **grand challenge of consolidation and embedding**, we have the following specific challenges in our resources and operations:

- We should ensure that we do not lose sight of our strategic financial management parameters. In the years ahead, the challenge will be containment of the salary budget, prudent investment in the academic project, especially in capacity, equipment and infrastructure, as well as managing expenditure and maintaining the infrastructure.
- Whilst we receive unqualified audits from year to year, we need to pay more attention to control measures that internal and external auditors identify for improvement from year to year.
- Student debt remains a problem because of the dire social conditions in our society. However, we must continue to manage it effectively.
- Although a great improvement from the previous process, the process of infrastructure development remains relatively slow. We continue to do everything to ensure we shall meet the deadline of December 2015 for construction to be complete.
- The improvements in integrated security, asset-tracking systems, online academic and administrative systems, wireless networks and so forth that should make CUT a 21st century university are slow in implementation. Yes, we have not had much stability in the Resources and Operations Division. I hope with the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor designate, Professor Neil Garrod, we will begin to see more speed in this area.

VISION 2020:



DELIVERING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the area of engagement with broader society, educationally, socially and academically, we have several initiatives that support our vision to produce innovations for the benefit of socio-economic development, primarily in the Central Region. I believe we are making more and more impact in this region through the various initiatives we have, some of which I mentioned earlier.

The Schools Advancement Academy (CUT-SAA) continues to play an important role in assisting learners in our region to improve basic skills in SET, and in enhancing educator skills to provide quality education to learners. The Academy was launched in 2013, albeit some of the projects that fall within the ambit of CUT-SAA have been implemented for a few years now. The Educator Mentorship and Development Programme (EMDP) for primary schools, funded by the Telkom Foundation, is moving into its second year of existence. Telkom has been gracious enough to provide funding worth millions for 2014 and 2015, as well as to expand EMDP to three other schools in addition to the three that we started with. Results from the participating schools speak volumes about the success of this programme.

The 100% pass rate that has been attained by students of the CUT Saturday School Project over the past few years is undoubtedly another CUT success story. This project is hosted by the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology.

The Winter and Spring Schools, mainly hosted by the School of Teacher Education, similarly have produced very good results. I would like to believe that CUT's consistent contribution towards improving the performance of high school learners through CUT-SAA has contributed to some extent towards the terrific 2013 Grade 12 pass rate of 87.4% that was achieved by the Free State Province's class of 2013. We are all proud that the Free State came out on top. CUT pledges to continue to support the provincial education department in improving learner performance.



Winter School 2013

These interventions are geared towards increasing the pool of students that we can recruit for our STEM programmes. In 2013, student enrolment stood at 13 525, of which 5 231 or 43% were in our priority area of STEM, the target for which, as I said above, should be close to 50% by 2020.

The HELSKA project I mentioned earlier in the speech is a strategic initiative whose mandate is to develop a dynamic, innovative and committed generation of emerging academic and management leaders within the university, as well as in industry, the

business sector and communities, with a special focus on the Central region. From CUT's own funds, this programme has enrolled a total of 4 PhD, 12 Master's, 2 diploma and 2 certificate students. To date, four fellows have been absorbed into the employ of CUT. A number of former CUT graduates and other regional leaders are also being supported to improve their educational and leadership skills they could use to plow back into CUT.

There are other developments that we are proud of, which include the development of the Regional Innovation Forum Free State (RIFFS). Together with the Department of Science and Technology and the University of the Free State, CUT has formed a tripartite alliance, which aims to bring together stakeholders from various segments in an innovation value-chain, in order to create a strong system of innovation in the Central region. RIFFS was launched at the CUT Bloemfontein campus in May 2013 by the Deputy Director-General of the Department of Science and Technology, Mr Imran Patel.



Fire means life! As a symbolic start to the project, representatives from CUT, DST and UFS lit torches, one for each of the partner organisations. Prof. Henk de Jager, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Research represented CUT; and Mr. Imraan Patel, Deputy Director-General represented the DST, while Prof. Corli Witthuhn, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research represented UFS.

Beyond the Central region, we are exploring opportunities for international strategic partnerships, which we will continue to build on in the next phase of the implementation of Vision 2020. In 2013, CUT hosted a very successful *17th Annual International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA) Conference*, at which our Internationalisation Strategy was launched. Our Internationalisation Strategy is being operationalised through the establishment of the International Office. CUT is now geared towards strengthening its international partnerships and having a footprint on the rest of the globe. In 2013, 3.8% of our student complement consisted of international students. In order to ensure a diverse student body that will enhance the learning experience of all our students, our objective is that, by 2020 – which is seven years from now – 10% of our students should be international students, recruited from the rest of the African continent and beyond.

Another highlight from last year I should not forget, was the unveiling of our Solar Flower. This is a solar- energy-based charging device that was designed by students from the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology. News of the Solar Flower made waves throughout the country. You see, as I said, students are not products, but, with supervision from our professors, they produce products in their own right!

Furthermore, the Product Development Technology Station (PDTs), funded by the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), assisted hundreds of SMMEs in becoming globally competitive, by providing them with the technological support they need to design and manufacture innovative new products.

One example is a water trough that is designed to store water; a braille graph that has been designed for the blind; and an ear scan used to make an ear for a patient. The Centre for Rapid Prototyping and Manufacturing (CRPM) plays a vital role in the reconstructive surgery of state patients who do not have access to medical aid funds, and who suffer from severe facial disfigurement due to cancer and accidents. Additive Manufacturing Technology which is available at CUT, was used in eight surgical procedures during 2013, including patient-specific titanium implants, pre-operational planning models and prototypes for ear-replacement surgery.

Last year, CUT also hosted the *14th Annual International Rapid Product Development Association of South Africa (RAPDASA) Conference*, with the theme being “*Additive Manufacturing - Improving your world layer-by-layer*”. This very successful event attracted 122 delegates from industry, research and development institutions, academia and government. Eighteen of the attendees were international visitors from as far afield as the USA, Poland and Australia. Ten keynote addresses on the application of additive manufacturing in the medical and aerospace research fields, amongst others, were delivered by world experts in these fields.

All these achievements would not have been possible without the contribution and dedication of our beloved staff members and students alike, and our partners and stakeholders. Thanks to all of you for your contributions towards the realisation of our vision.

We are indeed looking forward to the year 2014 as a year in which we move beyond taking STEPS to take bold STRIDES in the realisation of our vision. This is the year in which we should begin to witness the fruits of our labour in implementing our new programmes. To deliver on our commitment to provide first-rate quality education, we will continue to intensify our efforts to attract and retain the best talent, and showcase cutting-edge creativity and innovation.

An exciting summit planned for this year will reflect on the progress made in the region against the backdrop of the Organization for Economic Collaboration and Development (OECD) report of 2012 on innovation in the Free State. International signatories and local experts will be visiting CUT during a week of intense discourse and networking. The summit will also look into the field of Entrepreneurial Education, and plan ways for its incorporation and development at CUT. I could go on, but in the interest of time, let me stop there.

CONCLUSION



Dear friends, to conclude this address, allow me to take you back to where we started, when I spoke about the journey of transformation we have steadfastly followed, and which was ushered in by the country's first democratic elections; when some of us who are gathered here today stood in long lines to cast a vote for the first time in our lives. It was exactly 20 years ago when the story of our democracy began. But how will that story carry on, from 2014 to 2015, to 2020, to 2030, and beyond?

Well thank heavens; it is not a CUT problem alone, but a national one, requiring a collective response. This has crystallised into something called the National Development Plan, a blueprint for our country's future which, although initiated by government, has involved a variety of stakeholders (including CUT) that have helped give it shape and form. This plan makes clear, and I quote:

"We have created a home where everybody feels free yet bounded to others; where everyone embraces their potential. We are proud to be a community that cares. Our story is no longer informed by conquest, oppression and resistance."

Friends, our narrative at CUT has changed, and is changing in steps and strides as I have tried to illustrate in my earlier remarks. Our new story, like that for the country, and in the words of the National Development Plan, is:

"open-ended with temporary destinations, only for new paths to open up once more. It is a story of unfolding learning. Even when we flounder, we remain hopeful. In this story, we always arrive and depart."

Our cause for celebration is founded on the fact, yes, that it is exactly 10 years now since we adopted our identity as the Central University of Technology, following the merger of the Technikon Free State and the Welkom campus of Vista University. On 7 November 2013, when we had our Management Committee Planning Workshop, I sold the idea of a big conference or (academic/social) celebration of what I may now call 20-10: 20 years of democracy and 10 years as a university of technology. I hope an A-Team member with vision and energy, supported by the Executive Team, will work on this idea and make it happen.

We now look into a bright future, 2014 and beyond. The milestones, achievements and successes reached and accumulated over the past decade, some of which I have highlighted, can only serve to inspire us to reach greater heights in years and decades to come.



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