

FEBRUARY FOCUS 2015

For most, the return to work in 2015 has heralded an immediate immersion into the frenetic pace of work and life at Unisa, to the extent that a colleague recently remarked: “My holiday seems to be a distant memory!” Allow me therefore, as we get to grips with the New Year, and at this late stage, to wish you all a very healthy, productive and fulfilling 2015. I trust that you will use your gifts and abilities to enrich and advance your own lives and that of our beloved Unisa.

At the academic opening, held on 3 February 2015 I spoke of the key challenges that we would be facing in 2015 and of the need for us all to find an optimal balance between our aspirations as a university, and the capacities and resources that we have at our disposal, for their attainment. A failure to find that optimal balance will not only jeopardize the benefits and security that we currently enjoy, but also the longer-term sustainability of Unisa.

I cannot emphasize enough the critical importance of your individual and collective contributions to our university’s sustainability. 2015 Marks an extremely important juncture in our journey to excellence and high performance. On the one hand, we will be bidding farewell to the 10-year strategy that has guided us successfully through the most complex merger in South African Higher Education history to our current position of pre-eminence in global, continental and national ODL, and on the other hand, the Unisa 2013-2015: Towards a High Performance University which has catapulted us to be where we are today where we are leaders on many fronts of ODL. We are now embarking on a new strategic phase that requires of us the same energy and commitment that has brought us to this point. It is a moment that should elicit in all of us a sense of pride and excitement: pride that over the past decade we have successfully co-constructed a new university *in the service of humanity*, and excitement that we are now called to grow and develop our new university into one which aspires to *shape futures in the service of humanity* – to an extent that we could not have envisaged in 2004!

The University of South Africa is called, and stands poised, to fulfill a pivotal role in South Africa’s Higher Education System as the implementation of the new White Paper (2013) gets underway. The question begs: Are we ready? I believe that we are. As an institution we must ensure that our commitments in regard to the 2015 Annual Performance Plan are finalized in good time. This will enable us to begin with the implementation of the 2016–2020 strategic phase of our 2016 – 2030 Strategy with a “clean slate”. There are three strategic goals for this period, namely:

GOAL 1: Towards becoming a leading, ODeL, comprehensive university in teaching, learning, research, innovation and community engagement based on scholarship.

GOAL 2: To craft and embed an agile, innovative, sustainable and efficient operational environment.

GOAL 3: To establish innovative technology platforms for a high performing University.

I am confident that the implementation of these goals over the 5-year period within a context of responsible and ethical stewardship of our resources, and transparent institutional governance and leadership, will enable Unisa to fulfill its obligations and expectations, and position us as the quality provider of ODeL in the *world*. I therefore urge all Unisan’s to make 2015 a watershed year in our striving

for the service excellence and high performance to which we all aspire. Our students deserve nothing less.
Let us make it happen!