



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

**WELCOME ADDRESS: STAFF ASSEMBLY – PRESENTATION OF THE
APPROVED BUDGET FOR 2012**

7 March 2012

Good morning colleagues

It is a pleasure to welcome you here this morning and to be able to share with you in an open and frank manner, the approved budget for 2012.

We have just returned from the first extended management lekgotla, which was held at Kievits Kroon Estates, and during the course of our discussions over the three days (from Sunday), it became very clear that higher education in South Africa is undergoing a fundamental transformation that is going to have a clear impact on higher education institutions and more particularly, the University of South Africa. The Report of the National Planning Commission, the Green

Paper on Higher Education and intimations from the Minister himself attest to a broadening of Distance Education beyond the relatively exclusive domain of Unisa, and a changing view of the scope and nature of ODL delivery.

As we gather and analyse information that will flesh out our understanding of the transforming role of ODL provision in South Africa and on the Continent, we must simultaneously ensure that we have a very sound platform from which we can meet and mitigate the many challenges that we will need to face and overcome in the years ahead. Some of these challenges include admission and enrolment planning, Learner Support, efficient and effective ICT systems and processes, vastly improve service delivery to our students, and regional and facilities upgrading and development amongst others. And yet simultaneously we must grow and develop Unisa to realise our vision and mission and to remain relevant in this changing environment. And so we also discussed priorities for Unisa to achieve precisely that.

I encapsulated the priorities that we will be focusing on in what I termed a *New Deal* for Unisa, and I would like to share these with you very briefly.

1. Academic transformation at the centre: bringing teaching and research into balance; recognising the place of intellectuals in

South African social change, and emphasising Unisa's reach internationally through distance education and postgraduate production

2. Employing and domesticating ICTs for staff and students: transferring skills and providing leadership Open and Distance Education; advocating the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) to democratise higher education
3. Placing regions prominently in the planning equation: positioning Unisa as a national and continental university; servicing humanity in Africa; signing agreements to further research partnerships to galvanise higher education in remote African spaces
4. Putting students' interests first: recognising inclusive leadership and supplying adequate teaching and research support at under- and postgraduate levels; investing in student training and development; acknowledging student claims to funding
5. Foregrounding research to promote innovation: promoting interdisciplinary projects and locating class-leading innovation at Unisa; attracting internationally recognised initiatives which profile Unisa's image
6. Building a consensual community: embracing collegiality, promoting communication, and advocating collaboration across

disciplines, engaging external stakeholders and consulting community participants

7. Asserting Unisa's role as a leading producer of master's and doctoral graduates for the continent: Recognising the large constituency of advanced researchers trained and equipped to lead innovation in Africa; acknowledging Africa's contribution to South African knowledges; appreciating intellectual reciprocity

Colleagues, the sound platform that I mentioned and which is vital if we are to achieve our goals, is of course our financial management practices, which include strict adherence to - and compliance with - recognised governance and sustainability norms and practices, as encapsulated in the King III Report and our statutory documents such as the Higher Education Act and our Institutional Statute. In fact, corporate and co-operative governance and sustainability came under the spotlight at the lekgotla and I can assure that we will be audited on these from now on.

But that is something that I welcome and support colleagues, because together they make for a well run institution whose finances and financial practices will withstand even the toughest scrutiny. Of course, it goes without saying that if we are to pass the test - and I would expect of us to pass it with flying colours - then we all have a role to play in ensuring that our conduct, particularly around

governance and sustainability, is ethical and in line with our statement on ethics and our institutional code of conduct. This is something that we need to keep uppermost in our minds at all times, and it is something that we need to practice diligently.

The presenters at the lekgotla painted a very sobering picture of a country that is in dire need of sound and transparent governance and visible ethical conduct. As a higher education institution we have a duty to contribute to the efforts to turn our situation around towards norms and practices that will be acknowledged and respected nationally and internationally. So you will see that regulatory compliance with these imperatives will be driven strongly from my office.

Clearly our financial management needs to be taken to new levels. We are very fortunate that we already have very sound practices in place and that we merely have to adapt and adjust to accommodate the additional requirements. But that is not our only challenge. We have to do so in a higher education environment that is placing very serious demands on our financial resources and capacities and so these have to be managed and monitored very judiciously to achieve a sound balance between the competing demands on our budget and the longer term sustainability of Unisa.

If I am correct there are currently three higher education institutions under administration and it seems that a fourth is imminent. Financial mismanagement and seemingly zero compliance with sound governance practices appear to be the underlying contributors to this sorry state of affairs. Unisa cannot and will not allow that to happen here.

It is clear that as we allocate our resources, as we negotiate around salary issues, as we contextualise Unisa in our very dynamic higher education environment, we must do so cognisant of the long-term implications that the decisions – especially the financial decisions - that we make today, will have on the Unisa of tomorrow. We know for example, that third stream income is becoming a more pressing reality and we have already set in motion a number of initiatives aimed at generating third stream income. At the moment these are focused on stakeholder engagement, special projects, our Unisa foundation and alumni amongst others, but we will also be looking at other initiatives.

Colleagues we face many challenges, but we have many exciting plans to grow Unisa into a world-renowned high performance university. Our finances will either facilitate, or inhibit those plans. Given the sound financial management that Unisa has enjoyed these past years, I believe that they will facilitate our plans.

I know we can look forward to very honest and open discussions and presentations from our colleagues in finance and estates and I invite you to feel free to pose any questions that you might have, in the Q&A session thereafter.

So welcome to this assembly. Let us listen attentively to what our colleagues have to share and what is being done financially to develop our institution into one of which we can all be proud.

Thank you