



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA

LAUNCH OF THE UNISA CHARTER ON TRANSFORMATION

27 JUNE 2011

- Mr Programme Director
- Professor Narend Baijnath: Pro Vice Chancellor
- Acting Vice Principal, Strategy Planning and Partnerships: Dr Thandi Sidzumo-Mazibuko
- Members of executive and extended management
- Colleagues and students in the regions
- Colleagues and students here present

A very warm welcome to you all on this historical day in our institution's transition. I say "transition" advisedly, because I believe that today marks a very important incremental step in Unisa's evolution to the kind of University that will engender respect and acknowledgement from all, not only for its excellence in tuition, learning, research and community engagement, but also for the collegial and caring manner in which its staff engage with one another, and with our students and other stakeholders. Our growth and transformation into a high-performance institution depends on both. One cannot happen without the other.

But colleagues, while we continue to work diligently at creating optimal conditions for teaching, learning, research and community engagement at Unisa, we must acknowledge as a collective, that we have perhaps not been as proactive as we might have been in the past, in engendering and creating the kind of ethos and working space at our institution that makes colleagues feel affirmed, valued and worthy. We

have not perhaps been as proactive as we might have, in making and taking the time for the kind of self-reflection and introspection that will conscientise us to those qualities and practices that confirm our own dignity and worth, and the dignity and worth of those with whom we work. I would like to suggest that very understandably, the merger process and all that accompanied it – and I am not going to rehash all of that – caused us to focus too concertedly on our own individual interests and concerns - at the expense of an institutional culture and ethos that reflects openness, warmth, compassion, inclusiveness, and community. I am delighted to say that that has begun to change.

In acknowledgement of that lack and the genuine sense of isolation and alienation that continues to be experienced by so many of our colleagues at Unisa, I have made it a personal mission - in fact, a cornerstone of my vision for Unisa – to work systematically, together with the leadership of this institution, and indeed, each and every one of you, to transform Unisa into the kind of university that we can all proudly call “home”.

Today’s launch of our institutional charter is not about platitudes colleagues. It is not about paying lip service to someone else’s externally imposed ideas of institutional culture and it is definitely not about yet another document that we can frame and hang up in our offices and then ignore as external to our frame of reference. Rather, it is about a serious and sincere individual and collective acknowledgement that if we are to become a high performance university we need to transform the prevailing mindsets at Unisa. It is about acceptance of the fact that such change can only come from within, and it is about a commitment and an undertaking to play our personal part in that transformation.

The journey thus far has been both inspiring and challenging. The transition began last year in October, when I started to communicate my vision as the new Principal and Vice Chancellor of this university. I see the period of transition as having continued into the the beginning of this year with the extended management lekgotla, which culminated with a draft transformation statement, supported by definitions of the 11 Cs plus one. Both of these were formulated to support the ethos of servant leadership that I trust will become an embedded characteristic of the University of South Africa. These were then workshopped throughout the institution and the regions and comments and suggestions were sent back to the task team who refined the statement and definitions to reflect the institutional “voice” that they contained. The charter you see on the screen before you is the result. It is *your* charter and it expresses *your* views and sentiments on the kind institution that we aspire to and the ethos that we want to prevail.

I have been so affirmed and touched by the enthusiasm and eagerness with which this process and all that it embodies has been embraced by colleagues from across the entire institution. Many departments went much further than the original brief to discuss and refine the statement and 11 Cs plus one, and immediately incorporate them in their departmental planning and activities. I am impressed at this initiative! I have even heard of a competition that was launched to find out which of the 11 Cs plus one are deemed to be most important for a specific department! It is this kind of commitment and enthusiasm

that will sustain and lend impetus to the momentum that has already been generated towards a transformed Unisa. We cannot afford to let go of that and I would encourage all of us to commit in similar spirit, to playing our part in the change we want to see.

I must say that I am really happy to be able to share this launch with the regions of this university as well, because from the outset I have been determined that they should become an integral part of the transformation process at Unisa. You will know that I have been on a process of staff, college and regional visits this year. The aim of these has been not only to share my vision for Unisa with colleagues but also to hear their concerns and sentiments about our institution and their role in its operations. The visits have been instructive, sobering and exciting. On the one hand it is clear that many colleagues in the regions feel isolated and distinct from the main campuses, but on the other it has been really touching to have been received with such warmth and delight, and to witness their enthusiastic acceptance of the 11Cs plus 1 and the desire to make their contribution to Unisa's transformation. And so I would like to say to the regions: "We have heard you and we are committed to being more inclusive in our engagement with you." This will not be a once-off round of visits. There are more in the offing. We are committed to building on our relationships in a sustained manner.

On 15 June we had our quarterly Senate meeting and a question was raised around possible confusion between this institutional transformation charter and the transformation statement and plan that is being prepared for HESA at their behest. There is a very clear distinction between the two. The University of South Africa's Charter on Transformation is a collective institutional expression of, and undertaking towards, the kind of institution that we envision and the behaviours that we intend inculcating personally and collectively, to that end. It is an undertaking to consider and work on mindset change rather than to look at institutional plans and targets in terms HIV/AIDS, gender, equity etc, as important as those are. In fact the HESA transformation report is receiving scrupulous and concerted attention, but we should understand that our Charter on Transformation speaks to moral and ethical choices and behaviours that will transform from within – individually and as an institution. The two are therefore complementary and together they will contribute to comprehensive institutional transformation that encompasses both the systemic and the personal.

So, colleagues I am proud to present to you our institutional Charter on Transformation. In an organizational context, transformation is a process of profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness. Unlike 'turnaround' (which implies incremental progress on the same plane), transformation implies a *basic change of character* and little or no resemblance with the past configuration or structure.¹

¹ Definition of transformation – Online dictionary.

So let us turn briefly to The University of South Africa's Charter on Transformation and see what we as a University say about transformation and how we intend achieving the high performance university that we aspire to.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

CHARTER ON TRANSFORMATION

PREAMBLE

We, the Council, Management, Staff and Students of the University of South Africa –

AFFIRM that the context of transformation in Unisa is unprecedented political and social change following the advent of democracy in South Africa

ENDORISING the need to:

- galvanize the university to help fulfill societal aspirations for a just, prosperous society as encapsulated in the Constitution
- provide equitable access to higher education institutions, programmes and knowledge
- redress previous injustices referred to in the Constitution and the Higher Education Act 1997, (Act 101 of 1997) based on race, gender, class and ethnicity, and - provide scholarship and tuition aimed at social and human resource development that is socially responsive

ACKNOWLEDGING

the collective efforts of higher education in South Africa thus far, towards a more equitable dispensation

WE DECLARE THAT

Transformation is fundamental and purposeful advancement towards specified goals: individual, collective, cultural and institutional, aimed at high performance, effectiveness and excellence. It entails improvement and continuous renewal guided by justice and ethical action, and achievement of a state that is demonstrably beyond the original. Individual and collective change requires regular and frequent introspection and self-critique to examine how assumptions and practices are expressive of and resonant with transformational goals. Cultural change requires the creative disruption and rupture of entrenched ways of thinking, acting, relating and performing within the institution and a willingness to adapt.

Institutional change entails the reconfiguration of systems, processes, structures, procedures and capabilities to be expressive of transformational intent. Transformation is monitored, milestones agreed,

progress evaluated and measured, with individual and collective accountability for clearly identified responsibilities.

Transformation is sponsored, driven and led by the Vice-Chancellor. It is also articulated and advocated by the entire institutional leadership.

Transformational leaders are to be found at all levels and in all sectors of the organization, not necessarily dependent on positional power. They are distinguished from mere actors by their insight into how things are in comparison to where they need to be, with the resolve and capability to act catalytically in pursuit of institutional and societal change imperatives, in the face of opposition, resistance and limited resources.

Transformation keeps us at the frontier as pathfinders: to find ever better and innovative ways of enriching the student experience, elaborating and building upon African epistemologies and philosophies, developing alternative knowledge canons, and advancing indigenous knowledge systems that ground us on the African continent, without averting our gaze from the global horizon.

WE COMMIT TO

constructing together a new DNA for Unisa, characterised by openness, scholarly tradition, critical thinking, self-reflection and the values of African cultures – openness, warmth, compassion, inclusiveness and community.

THIS WE SHALL ACCOMPLISH THROUGH

- COMMUNICATION: Ensuring shared meaning and promoting mutual understanding at all levels, by making explicit relevant decisions, actions, choices and events timeously and transparently
- CONVERSATION: *Active participation in dialogue that transforms the relationship and narrows the scope of differences while enhancing understanding and empathy*
- CONSERVATION: Preserving and utilising what is best from our legacy, making choices and decisions and taking actions in the present, which ensure a sustainable future
- COMMUNITY: *The university staff, students and alumni cohering around our shared vision, aspirations and interests in the spirit of Ubuntu, while embracing diversity in its multiple forms*
- CONNECTION: Reinvigorating stakeholder relations to find greater synergy, harmony and meeting of minds in pursuit of transformational goals
- CARE: *Fostering a sense of belonging among the members of the Unisa community so that they feel accepted, understood, respected and valued*
- COLLEGIALITY: *Cultivating an ethos of professionalism, shared responsibility, mutual respect, civility and trust while understanding and acknowledging each other's competencies and roles*

- **COMMITMENT:** Dedicating ourselves individually and collectively, to promoting and upholding the vision, goals and values of Unisa
- **CO-OPERATION:** Working together proactively and responsively towards the realisation of Unisa's goals and aspirations
- **CREATIVITY:** Nurturing an environment that is open and receptive to new ideas, that liberates potential and leads to imaginative and innovative thinking and action
- **CONSULTATION:** *Taking into account, in good faith, the views, advice and contributions of appropriate stakeholders and individuals on relevant matters...* and

COURAGE to act, decide and make choices with conviction and resolution in the best interests of the Institution.

THIS PLEDGE WE MAKE, confident that the institutional climate we seek to create will free us from the shackles of our pasts in order that we may face the future with confidence, pride and dignity.

Colleagues, last night there was a piece of distance education on *Carte Blanche* and Unisa was mentioned by one frustrated student who said: "I don't think anyone works there". Colleagues, that was so embarrassing! I think what was most hurtful was that students who had not been attended at the various distance education institutions mentioned in the report, said that as a consequence they had lost interest in studying. That is just so sad - and definitely not what education is all about. We simply cannot allow such comments to continue to be levelled, because they most certainly do not speak to any of the characteristics, qualities and aspirations contained in our Charter on Transformation.

So I think we can agree. Unisa can and must change and this Charter on Transformation is our articulation of what we desire and envisage for our institution. Through their unstinting support of all of the initiatives that we have embarked on to get to this point, management has led the way in endorsing our vision for a transformed Unisa. Similarly staff has contributed enthusiastically. All have had the opportunity to provide their inputs. That colleagues, is the essence of servant leadership – taking joint responsibility for our institution.

As a voluntary gesture of solidarity as we lead the way in demonstrating publicly to all Unisa staff and stakeholders our commitment to this Charter on Transformation and all that it espouses, I will now sign the Charter on Transformation, and I will be followed in this by the Pro Vice Chancellor Prof Baijnath, and the rest of Executive Management. Thereafter I ask that extended management join us on stage to also demonstrate their commitment. Similarly I encourage staff here present to sign the Charters in the foyer as expression of their individual commitment, should they feel so inclined. Colleagues who are not present should not feel left out. Everyone will be receiving a personal copy of the Charter, and shortly

each department will receive it's own copy that can be signed and framed as a visual reminder of our commitment to a new institutional ethos.

It remains for me to thank you most sincerely for the truly heartwarming support that you have shown me and our beloved Unisa on our journey thus far. We still have a long way to go and I will be asking you for your input into a number of institutional initiatives in the course of the year, including the drafting of an institutional Policy on Ethics. As Management we are serious about leading Unisa to a brighter future. We trust that you feel sufficiently enthused and committed to join us.

After the signing Prof Baijnath will conclude with a vote of thanks, after which you are invited to join us for refreshments. I thank you.