



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

ADDRESS: STAFF INDUCTION

ZK MATTHEWS HALL, MUCKLENEUK CAMPUS

08 July 2016

- Madame Programme Director, Ms Firoza Patel
- Dr PS Zulu, Acting Vice Principal: Institutional Development and Transformation
- Members of executive and extended management
- Mr Marius Bosch, Manager: Branding DC&M
- Our Motivational Speaker today, Dr Tibane
- Ms Mantshego Selepe, Manager: Skills Development.

- Colleagues and most importantly - new members of the Unisa family

I am pleased to welcome you formally to the University of South Africa. I trust that you will soon find your niches and your voices as productive and valued staff members.

In welcoming you this morning I thought I would offer you some very practical advice on how to settle in and tap into the life and rhythm of Unisa as quickly as possible; how best to use the information that you glean to establish and grow and develop at Unisa, and finally what we as Unisa management expect from you.

By now you would have realised just how massive this institution is – particularly if you have come from another higher education institution or from business or government. You will also have realised that Open Distance e-Learning is significantly different to contact education and that Unisa serves a very different student body. You will need to assimilate a lot, and adjust the way that you work accordingly. And colleagues, the best way to do that, is to familiarise yourself with the institution from top to bottom and in all of its complexity; with the higher education environment in which we operate; and with the challenges that we are facing as the largest higher education institution in the country – and the continent – responsible for educating about 40% per cent of all students in South Africa. That is a lot of students! And each of them is entitled to

service excellence, a quality education and a quality educational experience, which of course, is delivered by you, our Unisa staff. At Unisa, we place our students at the centre and we aim to produce quality graduates, who will be assets to our society when they graduate – rather than adding to the ranks of the educated but unemployable.

As a Unisa staff member you need to appreciate that Unisa is unique in the world. There is no other university that provides quality assured and accredited formal learning on the scale that Unisa does and there is certainly no other distance education institution, colleagues, that produces the bulk of its country's formally educated graduates. We should be extremely proud of that and appreciate the role and impact of Unisa nationally, continentally and globally. Unisa has in the past, and we will continue into the future, to change South Africa for the better.

But we cannot be that institution unless we all take ownership of the roles and responsibilities allocated to us and unless we truly commit to the transformation of our university in this time of uncertainty and dynamism. Do not allow yourselves to become daunted or overwhelmed by the vastness and complexity of Unisa; by colleagues who might be naysayers; or by gossip – much of which I can assure you is unfounded. If you have questions – ask. Don't merely accept uncritically information, practices or gossip which common sense

tells you are nonsensical or clearly unfair. At Unisa we genuinely care about our staff and our students and we are committed to their growth and development through a variety of initiatives. In return we expect our staff to care about the quality and calibre of work that they deliver and to exhibit professionalism, loyalty and dedication in the contribution that they make to this institution and its students.

So at a very basic level, I would suggest that you obtain a copy of the university structure (if you don't have one already, and make sure that you know who is in charge of each portfolio, what each portfolio is responsible for, how each portfolio ties into the work that *you* do at Unisa and how together, they drive our institutional strategy. If I were to ask you know, could you recite our vision, mission and values? Well colleagues, you should be able to. You need to know that you are working for the African university shaping futures in the service of humanity. That is what we Unisans do.

As an ODeL institution we cannot work in isolation or in silos because the very nature of our delivery model implies and involves a sophisticated level of integration with many other departments and functions in the institution. Unisa follows a blended approach as a pedagogically sound approach to promoting ODeL. The *e-* in ODeL means the increased use of ICTs, but not a wholesale e-learning approach for all courses at all levels in all Colleges. There will be no

‘one-size fits-all’ and flexibility and variation, both in terms of substance and pace between disciplines, will be our approach.

Our vision and strategy is to establish Unisa as an African Open Distance and e-Learning university leading the world using all the technologies available *in integrated ways*, so that technology is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Much research is emerging globally that is challenging our original thoughts on the role of technology, and this needs to be thoughtfully considered and compared, as we chart our path into the future, bearing in mind that we have made commitments in our strategy. In fact, if you were to ask me which word I would use to define successful ODeL delivery, it would be “teamwork”. *All* of you will need to learn to work comfortably and collegially in teams that comprise colleagues in your own departments and from across the institution. One of our greatest challenges continues to be breaking the habit of silo’d working and thinking - what I suppose one could call the “lone ranger” syndrome.

Of course teamwork has other benefits. I can think of no better way to make someone feel welcome and valued than to include them in a team and to ensure that their voices and their contributions receive due recognition and acknowledgement, and I would encourage you all to get to know one another socially as well as professionally.

Adopt an open door policy and make it your business to ensure that everyone you interact with feels welcome and affirmed.

Secondly, I want to urge you to read, read, read. Don't only expect information to come to you! Actively seek it out. Unisa is fundamentally committed to communicating regularly and prolifically with staff. You will find that our Intcom and E-news (on the Intranet) are rich sources of information that not only include important announcements from management, but also information on courses and training; seminars, conferences and assemblies; news about staff members, and a host of other really interesting and important activities that are underway in the institution. Read the various blogs and engage in the discussions. This is one more way in which you can ensure that you feel connected and a part of our institution and that your voice is heard. You should also read our various institutional publications, including those from the various colleges and departments because they contain a wealth of information that touches directly on the lives of Unisa staff and students.

I would urge you to take very seriously the responsibility that you have to exercise your academic citizenship, which I am sure is in your KPAs. That citizenship includes attending staff assemblies in particular, because it is on those occasions that I speak on key institutional matters, and that staff have the opportunity to respond

from the floor. Involving yourself in the life of the institution beyond the mere confines of your office and your specific duties, needs to become a way of life.

Thirdly, in opening yourself to the life of the institution be prepared to learn and to grow. Be prepared to be challenged. Not once, not twice, but all the time. Higher education globally and in South Africa is extremely dynamic and if we are to be able to serve our students appropriately, and efficiently, we need to move with the times and make the necessary adaptations. Some of that will mean changing the way we are accustomed to doing things, especially in the current environment. For most that is not a comfortable process – in fact it is generally met with resistance. But we simply have to realise that innovation requires different ways of thinking and doing; that transformation implies having the courage to open one's mind and change one's mindset; and that progress implies letting go and moving forward – often into relatively uncertain futures. We live in a terribly fast-paced and largely unpredictable world and those who can't keep up will simply be left behind. Change is generally not a bad thing and we need to embrace it to the extent that we are leaders and innovators of change, and not resistant obstructers.

At Unisa we have a very clear change trajectory and the best way to find out about that and to anticipate the demands that it will make on you, is to ensure that you are completely familiar with our *Unisa*

2016 – 2030 strategy, which you will find on the Intranet. The key features that informed the Unisa Strategic Plan 2016-2030 are:

- The African university
- Trend-setting comprehensive university
- Cutting-edge open distance e-learning (ODEL) institution
- A quality student experience
- University of choice
- Contextually relevant, optimised centres of learning facilitation
- Transformed and diverse university attuned to national development
- Leader in higher education management and good governance
- Unequivocal commitment to high performance and innovation

Unisa's Vision is *The African university shaping futures in the service of humanity*

The essence of Unisa's vision statement set out in the 2015 strategic plan *Towards the African University in the service of humanity* remains a compelling signifier of our bold aspirations and unique positioning. The new vision statement retains this aspiration with the added distinction that enhances the essence of Unisa's ambition. During Unisa's 140 year anniversary that was celebrated in 2013, there was an overwhelming recognition for the fact that throughout much of its history Unisa has been 'shaping futures'. This role remains a compelling opportunity as Unisa charts its future. 'The'

African university emphasises our deep commitment to being an Africa-focused and Africa-centred university: however, we are at all times equally cognisant of the demand to be globally competitive. Many universities in post-1994 South Africa declared themselves as ‘African’ universities without necessarily transforming their offerings, character or identity. Unisa, on the other hand, will differentiate itself by conscientiously and deliberately mainstreaming and affirming African knowledge and scholarship, addressing the African historical and developmental condition; whilst at all times retaining its global footprint and relevance. Given the progress made during Unisa 2015: Towards a High Performance University, Unisa can unequivocally commit to a concerted and dedicated trajectory to actualising its aspiration of being “the African University, shaping futures in the service of humanity.”

The Unisa 2030 mission statement affirms the unique character of the institution, specifically that it is the single dedicated comprehensive open distance learning higher education institution in South Africa. Added to this, quality scholarship culminating in the success and graduation of students who will make a difference in the service of humanity is the hallmark that has been clearly foregrounded in the 2030 mission statement. Given Unisa’s size and the particular teaching and learning pedagogy and modalities, optimal achievement of implementation will require a robust, stable,

cutting-edge ICT infrastructure and platform. The priority of the technology infrastructure - as the foundation and glue - is equally highlighted in the mission statement. The mission statement thus promises:

- I. Lifelong higher education for all and knowledge creation that is nationally responsive and globally relevant.
- II. A leading student-centred ODeL comprehensive university producing quality graduates.
- III. Provision of cutting-edge ICT applications and platforms.

Values

Unisa espouses the values of the Constitution of South Africa including the inalienable right to human dignity, and the recognition and respect of diversity for the attainment of equality. We also affirm our historical values of social justice and fairness as a constitutive element of dignity, emphasising freedom of conscience, belief, thought, opinion and expression, academic freedom and freedom of scientific research, freedom of artistic creativity, freedom to receive or impart information or ideas, and the inherent right to have dignity respected and protected. These empowering standards are inherent in all the rules and policies of Unisa. In aspiring to achieve its vision and be true to the commitments of its mission

statement, Unisa unambiguously and unequivocally subscribes to the following values:

- *Ethical and collective responsibility:* Ethics reflects the intrinsic and extrinsic values, principles, norms and standards to which Unisa is committed and is undergirded by respect, integrity, accountability and excellence. Our ethics guide all institutional conduct, actions, decisions and stakeholder relations, supporting equity and fairness. Against this backdrop, our decision-making will be participatory in the interests of the effective and efficient functioning of the university - all employees are equally responsible for decisions taken and implementation is underpinned by commitment and loyalty to and solidarity with Unisa.

- *Integrity:* Integrity refers to conduct guided by honesty, equity, respect, transparency, responsibility and accountability in all that we do. Integrity must be evident at an individual level, and it should be infused in the character of the institution through the behaviours of the individuals who constitute and engage with the university. It applies to all our stakeholders and reflects how we relate to them and how we expect them to engage with the university.

- *Innovation and excellence:* At Unisa innovation and excellence characterise the actions, attitudes and culture required to create new ideas, processes, systems, structures, or artefacts which when implemented, lead to a sustainable and high performing institution.

They are the underlying principles that we as change agents use to make a difference in the way we work with available resources to achieve our specific goals despite contextual and policy constraints. Innovation requires everyone to adopt a problem solving approach that fosters intellectual ingenuity and novel solutions rather than simply problem identification.

- *Responsive student-centredness.* Responsive student-centredness reflects our commitment to recognising, cultivating and promoting the interests and views students especially their lived experiences and prior learning in order to achieve academic access and success in an Open Distance e-Learning context.

- *Dignity in diversity.* At Unisa we will strive to promote humanness, anti-racism and self-worth in the context of cultural and intellectual differences for the attainment of equality, and non-discrimination on the grounds including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth.

Colleagues, these values speak to Unisa's soul and identity in all of its endeavours including but not limited to its scholarship and practices, its service to students and other stakeholders, its operations, sustainability imperatives and ambition to be a leader in good governance practices.

The Unisa 2016 - 2030 has three strategic Focus Areas:

- Strategic Focus Area 1: Towards becoming a leading ODeL, comprehensive university in teaching and learning, research, innovation and community engagement based on scholarship.
- Strategic Focus Area 2: To craft and embed an agile, innovative, sustainable and efficient operational environment.
- Strategic Focus Area 3: To harness ICTs to support the transformation of the core business, to enable high performance, service and quality to all its communities

Colleagues I urge you to familiarise yourself thoroughly with this document - it is your institutional “bible.” You should all have received a copy of the *Unisa 2016* Annual Performance Plan and Compact with Council. If not, you will also find that on the intranet. Please make sure that you work through it carefully and identify those actions which require your inputs and attention.

All of these documents that I have just mentioned, all of the institution policies, forms and templates, and all of the pertinent higher education legislations, policies and regulations are available on the intranet, so there is no excuse whatsoever, to say that you are, or were, not aware of them. It is your responsibility to

familiarise yourself with them because they are fundamental to the effective and efficient performance of your duties. If you don't know, ask. I have no doubt there will be many colleagues who are willing to help you find your feet.

I would also like to suggest that you familiarise yourself with the higher education environment in which we operate. How many colleagues here are familiar with our Enrolment and Admission policies? How many of you understand the policy and regulatory environment in which we work, and the impact that that has on our operations as a university? I can assure you that once you do know them you will have a far greater appreciation for the complexity of the university and for the need for you to comply with all of your responsibilities.

Think about our social mandate and the expectations that government has in regard to the contribution that Unisa can make in addressing our many challenges. The list colleagues, is endless, but if we want to be truly engaged and professional employees, and if we are serious about the work that we do, we cannot stand aloof from this very vibrant institution. We simply must immerse ourselves in its operations and embrace the changes and challenges that will undoubtedly mark our journey of transformation

Finally colleagues, we recently announced the *Leading Change* project, and if you have not yet received the latest copy of our Focus

magazine, please make sure that you get it because it has a lovely synopsis of the leading change project which you can keep for reference purposes. I have decided to dedicate the last five years of my tenure at Unisa to leading the change that must ensure that our university transforms and remains sustainable.

In 2011 we introduced our conception of a high-performing university, which we believed would be the catalyst for our strategic vision. That conception was encapsulated in our *Charter on Transformation*, and proposed the creation a new institutional DNA, through amongst others, the inculcation and practice of the 11 C's plus 1, the revitalisation of the academic project, and the development of a mind-set that is receptive to change, transformation and development. We are now building on that process. *Change* is not an event but a complex process guided by a vision, with no defined destination; it is a condition that feeds off its context and that requires constant renewal and rethinking; it is about transformation, new knowledge, wider scholarship, and different curriculum; it is about being an African university in character, not simply a university in Africa; it is about culture and systems. It is also about consultation and communication - and that is why it is imperative that I lead the change at Unisa. But I can only do it with you. We have to lead together. Universities are not dictatorships and participation is central to academic practice.

At the launch of our program on Leading Change I informed the University community that now more than ever before, our social and educational context is exerting an unstoppable transformative momentum. 2016, I believe, will go down in the history of South Africa and our university, as a turning point – a detour from the rather lacklustre and complacent “business-as-usual” approach of which we have *all* been culpable. Unexpectedly, our universities have been thrust into intense contestations around employment, insourcing and other social issues, including rape, exclusion, inequality, racism, corruption and poverty eradication, and our country is wrestling with similar challenges; all of this during an election year.

Vice-chancellors have been drawn into the centre of labour and economic transformation, even as they have to deal with their main mission, which is academic change. Universities are expected to take the lead in areas that have in the past been the responsibility of government departments. This represents a huge challenge for the higher education sector because our shrinking budgets are being stretched to the limit as a result of massive demands that are made on universities. These stresses and strains have been compounded by legitimate protests by students in respect of access, funding and academic support and success. They have also critiqued the relevance of many university curricula, which they argue, do not

speak to the urgent development needs of our country and Continent, nor our cultural identities as Africans.

I have already committed to addressing these burning issues directly. Leading change for me means leading change with academics because students and workers look to us to be involved in making a better future, and bringing new ideas and solutions to that future.

Colleagues, what I have realised as I have mulled over these complex issues and how to tackle them, is that it is not that there is an unwillingness or receptiveness to change, but rather that our approach has perhaps been reactive, fragmented and sometimes lacking in coherence, integration, communication and focus, thus making it difficult to generate the kind of transformative momentum that is so crucial for success. This has meant that a number of really excellent projects have been launched in isolation and have therefore not achieved the acknowledgement or cumulative impact that they deserve. So, leading change is about thinking of Unisa as a whole.

That is precisely what we intend doing with the Leading Change initiative which we launched at the end of June and which is featured in the Focus magazine. Leading Change aims to ensure institution-wide convergence and coherence among all of our change and transformation initiatives, be they academic, operational or systemic in nature, so that they all form part of, and contribute to, Unisa's

DNA. In that process I believe that we will all begin to understand and appreciate, through our active participation, that Unisa is a university that is the sum of its parts, and that our capacity to achieve excellence in all spheres, is limited only by the bounds of our collective imagination and our will to pull together.

Colleagues I will not take you through the five pillars of Change, but once again I ask that you familiarise yourselves with the project which is being managed by Professor Greg Cuthbertson, in my Office. I am sure he will be happy to engage with you on any questions that you might have.

Now I am sure that you are all feeling a little overwhelmed by all of the information that I have bombarded you with, but it is not necessary to feel that way. If you acquire the habit of seeking out information, of sharing in an open, caring and collegial manner, and practicing servant leadership, you will undoubtedly become very much a part of this wonderful institution.

I wish you every success as you move into your futures. This institution has your welfare at heart and that we are excited about the contribution that you have to make.

I thank you.

