



*The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor*

**PROF MANDLA MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR**  
**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**  
**THE SOD TURNING CEREMONY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**  
**(UNISA) AND RAY NKONYENI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**  
**UVONGO CIVIC HALL, 666 CRESCENT ROAD, UVONGO**  
**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
**02 MAY 2019**

Programme Director, it is my distinct honour and privilege to be co-officiating at this important function today. Five months ago, on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 to be exact, we met at the Main Campus of the university in Tshwane.

We signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the donation of land here in Uvongo by the Ray Nkonyeni Local Municipality to the University of South Africa.

Allow me, Programme Director, to revisit some of the points I made in December.

First, I noted and expressed the view that both the university and the municipality were making history through this collaboration. I wish to reiterate that point and once again thank the Executive Mayor and her Team, the Council, and the Administration of the Municipality for making this donation possible.

The second point I made was that this collaboration has the potential of turning Port Shepstone into some form of a 'university town'. I did however qualify that statement by noting that because we are an Open, Distance and electronic Learning (ODEL) institution we should not envisage such a town to be like Cambridge, Oxford or Grahamstown. Yet, there is a huge potential for UNISA to add to the vibrancy of this town, and by extension of the municipality itself.

Last, I argued that there is a huge potential for the university and the municipality to collaborate on a range of areas that can be of mutual benefit.

I wish to return to all these three points later on.

Today we are taking the project forward. But how will this project be of benefit to the people of Ray Nkonyeni? And, how will it be of benefit to Unisa?

### **The State of the Municipality: An Outsider View**

For us to have an appreciation of the potential that this collaboration holds I would like to consider some available facts about the state of the municipality and how the construction of a university campus within that area of jurisdiction may catalyse development.

According to the 2011 Census released by Statistics South Africa the former eZinqoleni Municipality had a population of 52 540 people before August 2016,<sup>1</sup> with a 0,42% growth rate over a period of ten years.<sup>2</sup> This means that the number would still be almost the same.

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<sup>1</sup> The previous local municipalities of eZinqoleni and Hibiscus Coast were merged after the August 2016 Local Government elections to form the Ray Nkonyeni Local Municipality

<sup>2</sup> Information on the former eZinqoleni Municipality before the August 2016 merger with Hibiscus Municipality to form Ray Nkonyeni Local Municipality. See [http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=993&id=eZinqoleni-municipality](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=993&id=eZinqoleni-municipality) (Accessed on 29 April 2019)

On the other hand, the former Hibiscus Municipality had a population of 256 135 people, with a growth rate of 1, 62% over a period of ten years.<sup>3</sup>

The combined population of Ray Nkonyeni Municipality should therefore be 308 675. It may be that the municipality has updated figures, obviously from your interaction with StatsSA and you being able to gain access to the latest data. Allow me though to use what I have to illustrate what I consider as the potential that this collaboration holds for us.

Additional information from StatsSA<sup>4</sup> which is of relevance to the university, and which we think should form the basis for this collaboration include the following:

- That the unemployment rate in the former eZinqoleni for the 10 061 who should be economically active stands at 41, 6%
- That 51, 9% out of 5 672 young people (meaning between ages 15 and 34) who can be employed in the former eZinqoleni are unemployed

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<sup>3</sup> Information of the Hibiscus Coast Municipality before the August 2016 merger with eZinqoleni Municipality to form the Ray Nkonyeni Municipality. See [http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=993&id=hibiscus-coast-municipality](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=993&id=hibiscus-coast-municipality) (Accessed on 29 April 2019)

<sup>4</sup> From the above links

- That 21, 1% in the former eZinqoleni do not have access to electricity
- That 79, 1% have no access to the internet, while only 12, 8% gain access to the internet through their mobile phones.
- Most relevant to us as a university is that only 4, 2% of those who are 20 years and older have some form of higher education qualification.

The picture for the former Hibiscus Coast is not particularly good either.

The following were recorded in 2011:

- That the unemployment rate for the 89 197 who are supposed to work stands at 28%
- That 37, 3% of young people out of the 47 407 who can be at work is unemployed
- That 14, 4% has no electricity
- That 64, 2% has no access to the internet, while 17, 4% access the internet using their mobile phones
- Again, for us the most important statistic is that only 11, 2% of people who are 20 and older have some form of higher education qualification.

What do these statistics tell us, and how may we intervene in order to bring change to the lives of our people?

The low levels of people with a higher education qualification is worrying. Equally, and related to success in education, is that there are still many people without electricity and internet connectivity.

What then may be done and how may this project address itself to some of these worrying statistics?

### **Some Possibilities with UNISA establishing a Centre in Ray Nkonyeni**

The first intervention that I submit will be brought by this project is that, through the construction of a centre in this area, the University of South Africa will bring higher education opportunities closer to the people of this municipality.

In that way we will be fulfilling that noble goal which our forebearers dreamt about and wished to bequeath on generations to come, that the “Doors of Learning shall be Open to all!”

It is our intention that the current 4, 2% and 11, 2% of people over 20 years who have some form of higher education respectively in the former eZinqoleni and Hibiscus Coast should increase.

What then are the actual plans for the centre that we will be constructing?

On completion the Regional Center will replace the facility at Bizana in the Wild Coast. It will support approximately 2 300 full time students and overall 5 000 students (this latter number including those who do not need 'full time student facilities').

The facility will consist of:

- Registration area
- Counseling space
- Computer laboratories
- Classrooms and study space
- Video conferencing
- An Advocacy and Resource Center for students with disabilities, and,
- A Hall

We intend to build the centre in such a way that it will be ready for future expansion. The analysis for various development options has already commenced. It is anticipated that the process will be completed within the shortest timeframe.

In terms of service area, the centre will cater for students in the greater KZN South Coast, covering towns such as Kokstad, Harding, uMzimkhulu, Margate, Port Shepstone, Ixopo, and Hibberdene.

Through computer laboratories and Wi-Fi, which is standard in all UNISA buildings, the centre will enable students to gain access to internet connectivity.

In the era when the world is 'marching on' towards and embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution it is important that our people, especially young people from working class communities, should not be left behind or outside when their peers from privileged backgrounds make advances in life.

As a university we have seen how young people from working class backgrounds have developed through exposure to fast connectivity. This



prepares them for the better lives that their parents work hard for and wish for them.

Programme Director, you will realise that I am emphasising young people as major beneficiaries of the services that we will be bringing once the new centre is completed and operational.

The simple reason is that the profile of the average undergraduate UNISA student has changed from the days when many in this hall were students. The average UNISA undergraduate student is now in their mid-twenties and is not working, and therefore considers him/herself a 'full-time' student.

This brings me to the third benefit that the new centre will have for this average student. With the age of our student going down we were confronted with demands from these students who need tutorial support. It was for this reason that the university shifted its approach and began to offer tutorials, both in person (contact) and now also electronic.

The new centre will therefore assist us to bring tutorial services to the students who, for all intents and purposes, differ a little from their counterparts at contact universities.

### **Potential Collaboration between UNISA and the Municipality**

Let me now turn to what I consider to be potential collaborations between UNISA and the municipality. Collaborations that should exist beyond this specific project but will in fact be catalysed by it.

You will recall Executive Mayor that I referred to possible collaboration between the University's Bureau of Market Research and its expertise in market forecasting, capacity building, and knowledge sharing.

It is my submission that the Bureau can, through the Regional Centre once it has been established, and even before then, have a conversation with the Municipality on what might be areas of collaboration, research, policy and market advice.

I am saying this against the backdrop of the requests being made to our East London Hub. Some of the municipalities in the Eastern Cape have started to voice concerns that it is expensive for them to send staff for training in Gauteng.

This says to us that we must make services available to support the training of government officials in and around areas where we have a physical presence.

In addition to the Bureau for Market Research some of our Colleges can and should be in a position to render some of the services that you may need. For instance, as recent as February this year we launched a programme in collaboration with the Department of Military Veterans. It involves 320 military veterans studying for four programmes that are offered by our School of Business Leadership (SBL), these being:

- the Management Development Programme in Safety and Security;
- the Executive Development Programme in Safety and Security;
- the Post Graduate Diploma; and,
- the Master of Business Leadership.

These programmes are offered at the SBL Campus in Midrand, the Durban Campus, East London Regional Hub, and Cape Town Campus. We will be expanding these programmes to other centres.

The SBL has many more programmes which I am sure the Municipality may wish to consider for its managers.

For us, the consideration is not how many people may ultimately register for our programmes. What is key is the contribution that we may make for an organisation. If two or three people enrol in one of our programmes and their learnings assist them to introduce efficient management practices and innovations; such would be our achievement.

We will know that through such efficiencies and innovations that our people on the ground are benefitting. That, ultimately, is what a university should all be about; having its programme leading to 'development for the people'.

There are many other areas of possible collaboration which we may explore. As I was preparing for this input I learnt, again from StatsSA data, that the former areas of eZinqoleni comprise 65% agriculture and conservation land. I noted for instance that in 2016 the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development launched the Horse Shoe irrigation scheme and the Woyisane/ Riverside cluster projects, which involve vegetable and tea tree plantations.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For basic information on these initiatives see [https://www.kzndard.gov.za/images/Documents/DARD\\_Projects/Wosiyane-and-Horseshoe-project-profiles.pdf](https://www.kzndard.gov.za/images/Documents/DARD_Projects/Wosiyane-and-Horseshoe-project-profiles.pdf) and <https://www.kzndard.gov.za/images/Documents/Events/2016/Launch-of-Ezinqoleni-Projects.pdf> (Both pieces of information accessed on 29 April 2019)

These two projects, and surely many others out there that may be spearheaded by the national, provincial and local spheres of government, have a potential to advance the economy of the municipality.

Our own College of Agriculture and Environmental Management, through the Centre of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, may be able to make some modest contribution in the sharing of ideas on how the latent potential that lies within this area may be harnessed.

It is when we roll up our sleeves as a university that we get to learn and develop expertise. Importantly, it is when we do that that we can truly be considered to be of service to humanity.

Executive Mayor, I would like to close by saying that for us at UNISA the acquisition of land as you have generously donated and the subsequent construction of a new centre as we will be doing, are not simply about concrete and glass. Neither are such developments for the narrow interests of the university.

Ultimately, a university must exist for the betterment of society. We therefore see this project as a catalyst for a bigger vision. In this case, we see that vision being fulfilled through potential collaboration with yourselves.

I therefore hope that we will keep the lines of communication open and think hard about what we can do together.

It is further my hope that the next time we host a function like this will be when we will be opening the centre. At that stage we should be able to announce concrete collaborative programmes, or in fact reporting on how far those would have been gone down the lane of implementation.

Once again, I wish to thank you Executive Mayor, the Municipal Council, the Municipal Manager and his Administration, and all who have made this project possible.

On behalf of the University Council, Management, Staff and Students, I wish you all the very best.

Thank You!!!