



*The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor*

**PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**PRINCIPAL'S SUMMIT**

**LERIBA LODGE**

**8 – 9 JULY 2015**

Good morning colleagues

In February 2012, at our academic opening, I spoke at length about the way forward for our university. I titled my address: ***Institutional agility and high performance in a dynamic higher education milieu – where to Unisa?*** I used the following quote by Paul Meyer:

“Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort.”<sup>1</sup> Unquote.

Now, in 2015 we are preparing for the implementation of our new *Strategy 2030*, more pertinently, the first phase of that Strategy, that is 2016 – 2020, and this Summit provides an opportune moment to reflect on where we have come from since 2011. I think we will be amazed.

We adopted the notion of an agile, high performance institution, intelligently responsive to our environment and its changing dynamics, both internally and externally. To me, this implies that as an institution, and as individuals, we need to adopt and nurture a mindset

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<sup>1</sup> Paul J. Meyer. Founded the Success Motivation Institute in 1960 and dedicated it to "motivating people to their full potential."

flexible enough to accommodate the different and embrace innovation, even where it may be seemingly alien to our lived experience or sometimes beyond our understanding! We agreed that failure to respond to our environment in a proactive and timely manner will ultimately spell our redundancy and failure as a quality higher education provider.

We understood this all too well as we began to *create a new DNA* for Unisa. We introduced a new leadership style, *Servant Leadership*, which fosters an inclusive style of management and empowerment, and encourages an egalitarian ethos of individual career and personal development. Simultaneously, we restructured the institution to give effect to my vision of a high-performance university. To that end we embedded the notion and practice of an institution that is focused on institutional development, and research and innovation, and equally importantly, we began a dedicated programme of stakeholder engagement, drawing in Government, the public and private sectors, sister institutions, partners and alumni, to work collaboratively in finding the optimal educational solutions, not only for our students, but also for our country.

I believe we have made very significant progress in that transformation, but as we are all too aware, the goal posts keep on shifting in line with our very dynamic sector, system, and national and global environment. Equally, we cannot be insular in our strategy and planning, because as I said, this exposes us to the risk of isolation and irrelevance. Let me provide an example of what I mean. We are all proud of the *Unisa 2015 Strategy* and the subsequent *Unisa 2015 Revisited* and our aligned cyclical planning regime. It provided a superb platform from which we are able to manage and implement our evolving operations. But we realised in 2011, that the *Unisa 2015 Revisited* did not reflect with sufficient clarity and simplicity, our changing institutional priorities; nor was it entirely cognisant of, and responsive to our changing environment and our explication of Unisa as a *Mosaic*.

And so we harnessed our agility and innovation and reconfigured the *Unisa 2015 Revisited* into 5 simply-stated goals which reflected Unisa's key focus areas for the next three years, that is, 2013 - 2015. All of the existing actions and projects were reallocated according to these priorities, and included our dedicated foci on people; risk, ethics and governance; and stakeholder engagement and partners, which we introduced in 2011. All of these underpinned our institutional priority and core business of teaching and learning, research

and innovation, and community engagement. That priority can and will never change. And so the newly formulated Goals for 2013 - 2015 centred around :

1. Academic - this includes all activities in the academic domain
2. Governance – This covers all governance, sustainability and compliance matters
3. People - this includes all HR and people-focused matters
4. Service – this includes systems, processes and actions that impact on our various levels of service
5. Partners and stakeholder engagement – this covers broad partner stakeholder engagement

The intention was that this simple exposition of our priorities would draw planning more closely into the mainstream of our daily operations, through a deepening our collective understanding and appreciation of its fundamental role in our quest for high-performance. Each year this process and the goals have been revisited and revised where necessary, to ensure consonance with the changing environment, to the extent that our annual versions for 2014 and 2015 introduced the practice of Compacts with Council and the Annual Performance Plan. This of course was introduced in line with our new regulatory framework and integrated reporting requirements.

Our planning is now informed by and aligned with our Enterprise Risk Management Framework and annually revised Key Risk Register, Our 11Cs plus 1, our Charter on Transformation, our Service Charter, and our governance framework, including of course, ethics and sustainability. All of these , plus key institutional policies and statements are contained in a single publication which is made available to all staff at the beginning of each year and included on the Intranet under the strategic documents.

As a collective I think we would agree that our strategy and planning has become an entirely different animal to what it was a mere four years ago. On the one hand we feel burdened down by bureaucracy, compliance and reporting requirements, and by the spectre of auditable evidence that has seeped into everything we do, but on the other hand we need to acknowledge that now, more than ever before, higher education is responsive to our environment and the people that we serve – our students.

So what we need to ensure now, is that we finalise all of the actions in our APP and Compact with Council, that we take on board all of the sound and ethical governance practices to ensure institutional sustainability into the future and to lay a solid foundation for the seamless transition into our next strategic phase, especially given that our priorities, as you will note, continue to reflect key institutional imperatives, but in a more succinct and powerful articulation. It is to these that I now turn.

## **UNISA 2016 - 2020**