More than the sum of its parts?

Formation of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in the Western Cape

Teresa Barnes

In May 2002, Cape Technikononkon and Peninsula Technikon, two institutions on opposite sides of greater Cape Town, were instructed by the Minister of Education that it was the intention of his Ministry that they should become one institution as of January 2005. This chapter tells the story of how, over a two-and-a-half-year period, these two institutions unwillingly came together.

In this chapter, I take a largely historical approach to the story of the merger, arguing that the two institutions — although both bound to the unequal processes of apartheid resource allocation — had developed very different operational cultures. I specifically show how in the cases of budgeting and conceptions of democratic functioning, these cultures clashed during the pre-merger period.

Cape Technikon

Cape Technikon was an urban campus. Its history was inextricably bound with the racist social engineering of the old regime. It was built in the 1980s on the ruins of District Six: a once vibrant, racially mixed inner-city neighbourhood on the lower slopes of Table Mountain that was declared a white area in 1966. The homes, shops and offices of District Six were completely bulldozed by the 1970s. Estimates are that between 50 000 and 70 000 people were forced from their homes and relocated to segregated slums situated across the peninsula: Hanover Park, Manenberg, Gugulethu and Lavender Hill. Along with the destruction of Sophiatown in western Johannesburg, the razing of District Six became one of apartheid’s most visible and durable historic scars: a long, bleak, ghostliness that to this day begins abruptly in the midst of the bustle of Woodstock and reaches approximately two kilometres into the heart of the city. But whereas the cruelly named suburb of Triomf was built on the ruins of Sophiatown, public protests prevented a similar white working-class housing scheme from taking shape in District Six. But constructions did rise on the city-side edges of the District: a police barracks, the architecturally ugly Good Hope
Convention Centre, the even uglier Oriental Bazaar, and Cape Technikon, the newest incarnation of technical education for white students in Cape Town that had begun as far back as 1920.

Plans to build the technikon were vehemently opposed: ‘In 1979, [a] proposal to build a new 44-million rand technikon ... in District Six stirred up a great deal of controversy, since it required the demolition of 348 houses still standing and inhabited by 354 families (that is, about 2 500 persons, not yet removed, almost all of whom were Coloured).’

As a member of the ‘Hands Off District Six’ campaign later recalled:

… by the 1970s, when the last of the houses had been bulldozed, there was near common consensus – an expression of collective will on the part of most Cape Town citizens: the ground was to be treated as salted earth – no one was to build there and pressure was put on entrepreneurs to keep out. For a while this remained amazingly successful, so much so that the government was forced to use the Technikon as the thin edge of the wedge. Where nobody else would build, the Technikon would put its footprint. And it did.

Despite pleas by concerned citizens and by architects, planners, sociologists; despite the fact that alternate sites had been identified, the Technikon under its then head, Dr. Theo Shippey, insisted on going ahead. I can recall convening a public meeting at the Irma Stern Museum where Shippey was presented with weighty technical and sociological evidence as to why the Technikon should not be built in the district. It made no difference. The nondescript, no-face buildings that sprawl on the site now, are a monument to that intransigence.

The first technikon buildings, for Engineering and Architecture, were completed in 1986. Housing was built for staff members, so that 3 500 white technikon employees were practically the only residents of the old District. Eventually the entire campus was to use about 20 per cent of the land area of District Six.

Prof. Shippey, appointed principal in 1979, retired as Rector and Vice-Chancellor in 1997, when he was succeeded by Dr Marcus Balintulo.

In 1995, the technikon’s range of degree programmes included 65 National Diplomas, four National Higher Diplomas and 46 Bachelor of Technology degrees. The first doctorates of technology degrees were awarded in 1996.

Cape Technikon was established specifically to serve white students. There seems to be no record, or even urban legends, of Cape Technikon students involving themselves in the kind of political action that marked their neighbours at the University of Cape Town. It is probably fair to say that before 1994, Cape Technikon was a politically quiescent campus which did not challenge the apartheid state.
In 1987, the institution ‘applied for and was granted special permission to have the Government’s regulation lifted on the quota for black students’. The following year, there were 29 African students at Cape Technikon – one per cent of the student body. This rose to 18 per cent in 1998 – although at that point, Cape Technikon still had the highest percentage of white students of any of the historically white technikons, with 53 per cent. The enrolment of black students increased rapidly; by 2002, the student body headcount was 31 per cent African, 29 per cent coloured and ‘only’ 40 per cent white – although this figure still showed Cape Technikon with the highest headcount percentage of white students of any technikon in the country.

Data suggest that the diversification of the teaching staff may have been similarly slower to change than in counterpart institutions. Whereas in across the group of historically advantaged technikons, 89 per cent of instruction and research staff were white (and 70 per cent male) in 1988, falling to 76 per cent white (67 per cent male) in 1998, the permanent teaching staff of Cape Technikon was still 86 per cent white (although 65 per cent male) in 2002. In 2003, out of an academic staff complement of 399, 25 were African, 56 were coloured and 310 were white.

These staffing figures are not exactly equivalent, as the first and third sets include contract staff while the second does not. Still, in conjunction with the student headcounts, they do suggest that as late as 2003, Cape Technikon was, at least quantitatively, among ‘the whitest’ higher education institutions in the country.

Perhaps we can give the last word on Cape Technikon’s history to the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal:

[In the 1970s] … this Technikon was defying community feeling and moving to the hallowed, racially bleached, ground of District Six when about 60 000 people of colour were displaced by apartheid. This stupidity by those who ran the Technikon led to massive local opprobrium, and cheers from the apartheid regime of the day; and indeed even refusal by many civic institutions including a rather staid newspaper like the Cape Times to make the usual annual donation to the Technikon. I also recall that the British Institute of Architects tabled a demand that no member should be involved in tendering for contracts for such institutions. But now, we have seen the hideous past turned into a democratic present and future, and places of learning like this have cast off their shackles and become real centres of education and enlightenment and transformation.
Peninsula Technikon

Peninsula Technikon (Pentech) was located between the suburbs of Belhar and Bellville South, some 25 kilometres away from central Cape Town. This middle/working-class area is located on flat, sandy terrain, covered in scrub grasses and thin, weedy trees. Both are coloured suburbs; Bellville South so particularly after 1955, when ‘the (white) town council of Bellville “made the drastic proposal that all Non-White residents should move out of the present developed suburbs to an area across the railway line, in Bellville South”’.14 In nearby Bellville, the citizens proceeded to construct ostentatious monuments to Afrikaner nationalism: D.F. Malan High School (1956); Tygerberg Hospital (‘the first to teach medicine and dentistry in Afrikaans’); the headquarters of the giant financial/insurance company Sanlam (1962); and the largest Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape (1975).15

The genesis of Pentech was the pre-apartheid division of technical education by race, dating from the establishment of trades education for coloured students in the 1920s. Segregationist and later apartheid restrictions against the training and employment of coloured apprentices, artisans and the contested presence of coloured students in general in urban spaces constantly hemmed in the breadth and depth of courses and qualifications that could be offered. By the early 1960s, secondary and post-secondary coloured technical students were trained in Athlone and in central Cape Town. By 1967, the Coloured Affairs Department had decided to move post-secondary coloured technical education out of the central city to the large plot in Bellville South. New buildings housed the 201 students enrolled in that year. Pentech grew vigorously through the 2000s, and by 2002 it had grown into an impressively spacious and attractive campus of brick buildings for a student body of approximately 9 000.

The first twenty years of history of this institution bear the weighty imprint both of the restrictions on the autonomy and the pigeonholing of people of colour in South Africa; but also of a gradual determination to achieve through demand and persistence that which had not been granted. Linda Chisholm wrote of the state’s response to the shortage of technically skilled employees in South Africa in the 1980s:

The recent growth of technikons for blacks is also a new development. By 1981 there were four in South Africa. It is envisaged that technical workers and black middle management, so-called High Level Manpower, be trained here. Courses are offered in electrical, civil, mechanical … engineering, ‘focusing more on the “practical” than the “theoretical” aspects of engineering’. In-service training of already qualified personnel in labour relations is also seen as a vital task of technikons.16
As with the other higher education institutions for blacks in the Republic (as opposed to those in the Bantustans, which were administered somewhat differently), Pentech\(^1\) was run by the Department of Coloured Affairs until 1984, and then by Department of Education of the ‘House of Representatives’ of the apartheid tri-cameral parliament.\(^2\) In those years, the institution had no budgetary autonomy of its own and had to apply for permission to spend any funds on equipment, supplies and staffing. Technikons generally had less autonomy than the universities, but black technikons such as Pentech had the least of all.\(^3\) In 2004, long-serving Pentech employees remembered stories such as the following:

\[1\] In 1976 when the Surveying course was started there was a struggle getting instruments. Without them we couldn’t give students practicals. You had to get three quotes, and you choose one and take it to the tender board in Roeland Street [Coloured Affairs in Cape Town] and there they ask you ‘Now why do you want this specific one, can you not buy that one?’ I still remember a hell of an argument I had with Schoeman there, I said ‘Listen man, can I perhaps explain to you why I want this specific instrument?’ I said, ‘Say I’m buying a car and this is the specification: 16cc engine, 15” tyres, 4-speed gearbox, colour must be red – now if there’s a Cortina and a Mercedes, is there a difference in the specification? No. So why now you asking me this nonsense? Of course I want the Mercedes.’ But he didn’t understand.

\[2\] When Tom van Breda started working at the College there was only one piece of equipment in the department, a donated oscilloscope without probes or plugs. Until 1983 he also had no budget for equipment and had to bring his own from home. When he was able to buy equipment the process was so unwieldy it led to bizarre events: he had to write the spec, translate it into English and Afrikaans, send it to Coloured Affairs which published it [as a tender] in the December issue of the Government Gazette, which everyone was too busy to read at that time of the year, so no-one responded and the Engineering Department had to return the unspent money. One year a petty official at Coloured Affairs sanctioned the purchase of only one component of a piece of equipment they had requested, so the department ended up making a useless purchase.

\[3\] The tender system was a long, complicated process. First it went to the local Coloured Affairs, then to Coloured Affairs Head Office, and then it went to the Tender Board in Pretoria. Remember, in January we start writing the specs, then in September/October the guy comes and
he says, 'There's spelling mistakes'. They were niggly about that. And the typewriters didn't work that well at that time. 20

Professor H.J.S. van der Walt was appointed the first principal of Pentech (then the Peninsula Technical College); seemingly, he became a member of the Broederbond only after his appointment, in 1969. 21 He was succeeded by Mr. M.C. Marais as Acting Rector in 1976.

When van der Walt was in charge there was no SRC and the College was run like a school. You never saw that man ... Then ‘Maraitjie’ (M.C. Marais) came. He started the first SRC. He refused the cops entrance here. He used to stand in front of the students and actually said, ‘Dis my studente’ and chase them away, which didn’t happen on the other side [of the road, University of the Western Cape (UWC); where] the cops just rolled in as they want. 22

The first black head of the institution, Dr Franklin Sonn, was appointed in 1978; his successor, Professor Brian Figaji, served as Rector from 1995 until his resignation at the end of 2004 and the merger of Pentech with Cape Technikon as the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in January 2005. In the 1970s, Sonn and Figaji (as vice-rector) pushed for the membership of Pentech in the forerunner of the Committee of Technikon Principals; this was granted in 1981. 23

Pentech, like some of the other black institutions in the country, involved itself in political struggle. The political cyclones that affected secondary and tertiary level education in the Western Cape in the 1970s and 1980s did not bypass Pentech. Students in 1976 became involved in the riots that swept the country following the suppression of the Soweto Revolt in June of that year. According to the then-acting Rector, M.C. Marais:

In fairness to all it needs to be stated categorically that, the students, though roused by events, adopted a sane, responsible attitude. The members of the SRC deserve special mention here for the controlled manner in which they made their grievances known. It also needs to be said that the several attempts at arson and vandalism (that caused some damage) could not be laid at the door of our students. The College successfully rode out this storm... 24

In 1979, Rector Sonn refused to expel striking members of the SRC as the state demanded: ‘I fully accepted the need for the students to leave the lecture rooms to mobilize and as a student body show their solidarity with the struggle against apartheid,’ he later stated. In August 1985, Pentech lecturers joined in a stayaway of Western Cape educators to show solidarity with boycotting students. 25 In 1987, Pentech — officially limited to enrolling coloured students...
chose to open its doors, without government approval, to African students. Unlike neighbouring UWC, however, Pentech did not have ingeniously to devise a new entrance policy that courted open confrontation with the state to increase its African enrolments, as technikon admission requirements were systemically at lower levels. Importantly, the number of African students at Pentech then mushroomed. In 1988, 11 per cent of the students were Africans, growing to 59 per cent in 1998. These high levels were sustained: in 2002, 63 per cent of Pentech students were African, and 34 per cent coloured.

In terms of its teaching staff, Pentech was less diverse. In 2002, seven per cent of the permanently appointed educators were African; 64 per cent were coloured and 28 per cent were white; the cohort was 64 per cent male.

For its first quarter century, Pentech operated with limited financial and educational autonomy. This crucial matter was not straightened out until the passage of the Technikons Act (Act 125 of 1993). It regularised the status of all of the 17 technikons that had previously been governed and administered in differentiated ways according to racial designation, and in a later amendment in 1993, gave all technikons the power to grant degrees equivalent to those at university level.

Peninsula Technikon consistently pushed back the boundaries in which the apartheid state had sought to circumscribe coloured education – in terms of diversity of its student body, links with other educational bodies and operational autonomy. This was perhaps best symbolised by two developments. First, Pentech developed links with the prestigious institution, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States, and declared its ambition to be ‘the MIT of Africa’. Second, the new Information Technology Centre was opened in 2002, which was one of the institution’s proudest moments:

The Information Technology Centre is the only one of its kind in Africa. It was built at a cost of R26 million. This amount excludes the cost of furniture and of more than 1,400 computers. The state of the art building is fully air-conditioned and makes provision for up-market Business Faculty facilities, a video conferencing facility, a writing centre and structured and instructional information technology facilities. Students have access to the Internet and emailing facilities ... The building is wheelchair-friendly, so that students and staff with physical disabilities have easy access. Core sponsors contributed 4-5 million [rands] towards the final cost. No new staff were employed. Instead the new centre created development opportunities for existing staff.
Table 7. Quantitative indicators at Cape Technikon and Pentech, 2002

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<tr>
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<th>Cape Technikon</th>
<th>Peninsula Technikon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student headcount enrollment</td>
<td>14 000</td>
<td>9 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTE enrollment</td>
<td>11 000</td>
<td>7 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent academic staff</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>202</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent executive and specialist/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>support staff</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of students in human sciences</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students in natural sciences</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income</td>
<td>R 258 300 000</td>
<td>R 158 800 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure</td>
<td>R 279 600 000</td>
<td>R 206 600 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearly income growth rate</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearly expenditure growth rate</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition fee income</td>
<td>R 89 600 000</td>
<td>R 47 300 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subsidy income</td>
<td>R 166 300 000</td>
<td>R 136 900 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income distribution: tuition</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income distribution: subsidy</td>
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<td>74%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income distribution: gifts</td>
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<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE students per permanent academic</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidy per FTE student</td>
<td>R15 000</td>
<td>R19 000</td>
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Merger proposals and institutional reactions

The National Working Group (NWG) report was leaked to the press at the very end of 2001, which forced a public release of the document slightly earlier than had been planned, in February 2002. As far as the two technikons were concerned, the NWG Report recommended to the Minister of Education that Pentech be merged with UWC; but contained no merger proposals for Cape Technikon, stating that the institution was strong and viable as it stood. The status of these proposals was advisory. The official process was that, within a
month, Minister Asmal, having received the NWG’s advice, would take the Ministry’s own proposals to the national Cabinet for approval and gazetting, before a period of public comment, leading to a final Cabinet decision.

The NWG rationales given for the Pentech/UWC merger were:

- The two institutions have a similar ethos of serving disadvantaged students
- The merger would facilitate access to and success in higher education for under-prepared students
- Geographical proximity (separated only by a road, Symphony Way, running between Belhar and Bellville South)
- A merger would strengthen both institutions, especially UWC, which would gain a growing, financially stable partner.

Both UWC and Pentech immediately reacted negatively to the NWG proposals. Importantly, however, from the very beginning, they followed separate and very different strategies in opposition. The rector of UWC, Brian O’Connell, orchestrated a behind-the-scenes pressure campaign to remove UWC from the merger. Relatively mild public statements set forth UWC’s position that the proposal did not make sense; but he did not make public statements attacking the NWG, the Ministry, or the Minister. His major argument was that UWC was slowly but successfully pulling itself out of its recent financial and enrolment woes, and the heavy administrative and management load of involvement in a full-scale merger would only make the institution’s burdens that much more difficult to bear.

‘The report fails to address the real issues of concern: equity and sustainability,’ UWC rector Brian O’Connell said. ‘We are analysing the document as it (has) many inconsistencies and selective use of data. The proposed merger does not make any academic sense as there is no meaningful overlap between the two institutions. We have two distinct education profiles.’

Brian Figaji of Pentech, on the other hand, was much more publicly combative.

‘We are ready for a fight,’ was the response of Peninsula Technikon rector, Prof Brian Figaji, on Monday when approached about the recommendation of the national working group on higher education about a possible amalgamation of his institution with the University of the Western Cape. ‘This is called biting the hand that fed you. After we helped those presently occupying parliament’s benches to get where they are, they now want to shunt us around and think they will get away with it. But we are ready for them. We can afford a court case,’
said a fuming Figaji. ‘I will discuss this matter with my board as soon as possible, but I am convinced I have their support as well as that of the students to fight for our independence.’ Figaji said it made no academic sense to combine two academic institutions. ‘We fought for so long to create our own technikon character and to keep it. Why should we give up what we have worked so hard for to achieve? It seems to be a politically motivated decision.’

Figaji’s reference to the institution’s ability to afford a court case was full of interesting echoes, harking back as it did to the 2000–01 University of South Africa imbroglio and court case against the Minister, and asserting that Pentech was also ‘one of the big boys’ – ready and able to take the Ministry on.

Pentech, however, did not rely only on such statements; it also presented passionate, yet carefully reasoned, responses to the Ministry.

Peninsula Technikon has always responded very positively to the signals given by the Ministry or the Department of Education with respect to the desired direction for higher education. We have not engaged in strategies that were not in the national interest, even though they may have given the institution some short to medium-term gains. For example, the joint offering of the MBA under the auspices of foreign universities we have not embarked on, neither have we introduced distance learning programmes. Often our non-participation meant sacrificing significant amounts of revenue.

Peninsula Technikon is a proud institution with a reputation for good governance, financial integrity, strong leadership and management, an attractive infrastructure and a campus environment that can be compared with the best in the world.

We have worked hard to achieve this, in the belief that we owe it to our community to have a successful, prosperous and well run institution that will stand as a symbol of our pride and belief in our own ability, despite many decades of systematic damage to our self-image as a people.

The fact that the institution is viable and well managed should have made it the last candidate to lose its identity.

Pentech’s hopes that its arguments were being heeded must have received a boost from the speech given by the Minister of Education at the Pentech spring graduation ceremony in March 2002, during which an honorary doctorate was bestowed on Franklin Sonn. The Minister declared:

Franklin Sonn inherited an institution steeped in its apartheid origins and one with little regard to issues of scholarship, quality or relevance. He led it through the darkest days of our struggle against apartheid.
His determination and leadership enabled the institution to transform its policies and practices and open access to qualifying students regardless of race or gender. He also laid the basis at Peninsula Technikon of institutional management, administration and governance practices and traditions, which have become a model of excellence in the higher education system. The current Vice-chancellor, Professor Brian Fijagi [sic] has so ably built on these firm foundations.

... I doubt whether any address that I make in this period would be complete without some comment on the current restructuring process in higher education ... The Working Group has made a recommendation that Peninsula Technikon merges with the University of the Western Cape to form a new comprehensive institution. This, along with all the other proposals from the Working Group, is currently under consideration. However, I must emphasise that no decisions have been taken with regard to any of the proposals. Decisions will only be finalized by the Cabinet during April.

Both rectors were supported in their opposition to the NWG proposals by the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC), the Western Cape organisation formed in the 1990s to promote collaboration between the five higher education institutions of the region. Like the South African Vice Chancellors Association (SAUVCA), CHEC walked a thin line between articulating the legitimate interests of its member institutions and being seen as a mere talk shop with a real agenda to delay substantive change as long as possible: a smokescreen for anti-transformative institutional conservatism. To combat the latter image, CHEC tried to promote cooperation between institutions that were obviously not playing on level fields: three advantaged institutions (the universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, and Cape Technikon) and two disadvantaged institutions (UWC and Pentech). In relation to the NWG proposals, CHEC reiterated its stance that full-scale institutional mergers were not the best means of taking regional transformation forward.

While the five higher education institutions in the western Cape have already put forward their strongly-held view that the case for mergers in this region is weak, [a CHEC meeting held at the beginning of March 2002] re-affirmed the view that of all the possible ‘institutional arrangements’ the NWG was commissioned to explore, that of mergers is the least compelling for this region ... CHEC has offered the alternative approach of jointly-planned academic programme offerings to be worked out within a set time-frame (three to five years) to produce published plans that will deliver maximum co-operation, cost-effectiveness and quality ... According to CHEC, the NWG does not explain why this approach has been rejected in favour of a problematic
merger between two institutions that is likely to set the region back
years in terms of a ‘master plan’ for the region.\textsuperscript{38}

The next few months were ultimately to show, however, that the Ministry
decided against this approach – perhaps suspicious that gradualism was a mere
euphemism for the perpetual maintenance of the (unsatisfactory) status quo.
The Gordian knot of higher education transformation, in its view, could not be
untied; it had to be boldly slashed apart.

Thus the SAUVCA and CHEC arguments and Pentech’s anger came to
naught. The one set of efficacious approaches, however, came from UWC. On
May 30, the Minister apparently utterly astonished all concerned by presenting
his proposals, based upon but revised from the NWG Report, to the national
Cabinet. They held a ‘bombshell shock’ for the Western Cape.\textsuperscript{39} UWC would
no longer merge with Pentech, or indeed with any other institution, although
it would be strengthened by the addition of aspects of medical education to be
excised from the University of Stellenbosch. Rather, Pentech would now embark
on a full-scale merger with Cape Technikon.

The Minister’s announcement provoked another angry response from
Brian Figaji.

Pentech rector Brian Figaji said he was ‘completely dumbfounded’
about the decision. ‘I would like someone to tell me what we’re going
to achieve. I have no idea what the rationale behind this merger could
be. It seems as if my previous remarks hold true – previously white
institutions that are strong are being patted on the back for being strong
and those that suffered in the previous regime are being killed off.’

Figaji later said that his anger particularly stemmed from being told by the
Minister at a function in Pretoria some months earlier: ‘Don’t worry, I’ve
decided not to merge you.’ When the announcement of the merger with Cape
Technikon came in May, Figaji went into ‘a state of absolute shock’. He first felt
that he had been lied to, and then fury that ‘a black government was annihilating
a black institution’.\textsuperscript{40}

On 31 May, the dismayed surprise of Cape Technikon rector Marcus Balintulo
was reported: ‘This proposed merger comes as a surprise to us because the
National Working Group, in our view, had made a fairly accurate assessment of
the Cape Technikon as a sound, viable institution that is progressively catering
for a diverse population of students drawn from all our communities.’\textsuperscript{41}

The Minister’s announcement, published in the Government Gazette on 24
June, included a three-month period for public comment on the new proposals.
In July, the Department of Education sent a document to members of the
Association of Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (ASAHDI), SAUVCA
and the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP) which gave more detail on
the thinking behind the merger proposals. The following reasons for the Cape Technikon/Pentech merger were given.

- It would result in a large and strong technikon, which would be well placed to develop and strengthen career-focused education in the Western Cape.
- In the absence of inter-institutional competition for students, academic programme offerings could be both rationalised and widened.
- It would lead to efficiency in graduate outputs.
- It would improve staff and student equity.
- It would create the opportunity for the development of a new organisational identity, more in tune with addressing the challenges thrown up by the inequities of apartheid.
- It would enable the limited but growing research profile of the two institutions to be consolidated and enhanced.

At this point, it is difficult not to feel some sympathy with the two technikons, presented as they were with unelaborated documents in which issues such as poor staff equity profiles were identified as problems, the solution of which (it was confidently predicted) would become successful outcomes of a unitary merger. Without any further detail as to how the merger would positively influence these specific issues, it was almost as if—to exaggerate—unitary institutional mergers could also have been proposed as the best method of achieving world peace.

Pentech and Cape Technikon proceeded to mount separate campaigns against the merger proposal and the reasoning behind it. Separate campaigns were necessary, as a joint effort would have indicated that they could work successfully together—just the impression they did not want to give! However, Prof. Balintulo indicated that working separately did not preclude inter-institutional communication:

Professor Figaji and I are in constant contact, both in the context of the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) … as well as bilaterally as the need arises. Further, the two Institutional Forums have met and there was an agreement to set up a steering committee to strategise our opposition to the merger. Unfortunately an attempt to have the two Council Excos meet before [the submission was presented to the Minister on] 4 October did not materialise.

**Pentech responds to the merger proposal**

Pentech’s individual response was again two-fold. First, in September, it presented a submission to the Ministry on the June proposals. The submission pointed out what the institution saw as flaws in the reasoning for the mergers generally, and
specifically with regard to the Cape Technikon/Pentech merger. Again, it argued that Pentech was an innovative successful and growing institution, which was financially and educationally sound. Regional collaboration via the facilitation of CHEC was the better alternative. Merging would damage Pentech’s ability to serve its students and wider community. The proposals were so logically flawed that they could only be due to political considerations which placed Ministerial imperatives before institutional and community needs. The whole approach, the institution argued, ran counter to the goals of transformation.44

Second, by December 2002, the Pentech Council – declaring it was prepared to fight the merger with all the tools at its disposal – was receiving legal advice on whether or not it could follow Unisa’s lead, and take action in the courts to prevent the merger. Seemingly, there were some technicalities on which the decision could be challenged on procedural grounds.45 Through the first four months of 2003, Pentech tried to gather itself for a legal battle. But these preparations amounted to nothing in the end.

You have to know all your stakeholders are with you. Maybe [the Minister] had spoken to his representatives on Council – they said things like, ‘Is this [merger] really such a bad thing?’ We tried to argue it out but then there were divisions in Council. We tried to subpoena [the Minister’s] notes to Cabinet. The staff was also not unanimous and asked ‘What are our chances of winning? Will this disadvantage Pentech?’ So, there came a point [for] a judgement call [to halt the possibility of taking the legal route].46

These divisions in the Pentech community had been demonstrated on the evening of 5 September 2002, when the institution called a public meeting in the Sports Hall to air views about the merger. Newspaper advertisements proclaimed: ‘Your Say Can Make A Difference! Come and hear why we are unhappy about the merger and how YOU can help.’47 The hall was packed with students, staff and alumni. Pentech leaders spoke forcefully about the institution’s role in the liberation struggle and the consequent injustice of its virtual closing via a merger. This was probably the majority sentiment of the meeting. But a significant minority of students – many of whom were members of the South African Students Congress (SASCO), the African National Congress (ANC)-aligned students’ party – voiced their opinion that the institution would be wrong to oppose a national transformation plan, and their belief that they deserved access to what they thought were probably better facilities and more highly qualified teaching staff at the historically advantaged Cape Technikon.48
Cape Technikon responds to the merger proposal

Cape Technikon took a very different approach in the second half of 2002, although it had some elements in common with that of Pentech. In its submission to the Minister on the June proposals, Cape Technikon stated that it recognised that the South African higher education system was ‘in need of serious transformation’ but it was opposed to the proposed merger: ‘... structurally determined unitary mergers do not and cannot address the HE needs in South Africa, nor do they provide constructive ways to address the transformation goals put forward by the Minister.’

Up to this point, the reasoning of the two technikons was similar. But Cape Technikon then went in a completely different direction. Whereas Pentech had argued passionately for what was, in effect, the status quo, Cape Technikon presented two options for institutional reconfigurations, both of which involved its own dissolution into a different or larger unit: a ‘Cape Institute of Technology’ (CIT), or a ‘Cape University of Technology Partnership’ (CUT). This work was based on an earlier internal Cape Technikon initiative, the ‘Future Options Group’, born out of discussions on ‘what position the Cape Technikon should take regarding possible mergers and close forms of collaboration in the region’, held in the technikon's Senate and its Main Planning Committee since ‘early 2001’. Interestingly, it was noted that ‘the work of this Group is preparatory and proactive by nature’.

The 2002 response document which explained the CIT and CUT options noted carefully that the other institutions in the region had not been consulted on the ideas; this was solely a Cape Technikon initiative.

In the CIT option, Cape Technikon would transform itself into an institute of technology which would embrace a new mission and new forms of educational delivery: ‘The CIT, as we envision it, would be different from the universities in the province in major aspects: profile, orientation and focus of research and programmes, as well as in pedagogy...’

Oddly, the proposal is silent on the participation of Pentech in the CIT vision. Pentech’s name is not mentioned in this part of the document, although it mentions that the envisioned CIT would have, in addition to five separate campuses across the Western Cape, a ‘service point at Bellville’. Presumably this silence underscored the institution’s opposition to a unitary merger with its neighbour, as well as its desire to portray itself as willing to contemplate substantive change – although on its own terms.

The CUT concept revived an idea briefly mooted in the NWG report, a partnership (although not a unitary merger) between UWC, Cape Technikon and Pentech. This too would contribute to the formation of new institutional types, and would employ the strengths of each partner in a refocused mission to provide a range of technological educational services.
It should be noted that rare among the documents of this period – almost all of which show obsessive concern with institutional form and identity and little else – both the CIT and CUT options discussed pedagogical and epistemological issues, and presented concepts of substantive changes in teaching praxis and learning modes in tertiary technological education.

**But the Minister prevails**

In the end, however, neither Pentech’s pugnacious resistance nor Cape Technikon’s earnest offers were to sway the Minister. All their approaches came to naught. In December 2002, the Minister reported that the national Cabinet had accepted his proposals for the reshaping of South African higher education in the context of the powers granted to him by the Higher Education Act of 1997. Full-scale institutional mergers would proceed; Cape Technikon and Pentech would cease to exist as historically separate institutions as of January 2005.

The two technikons had two years to decide how to implement the merger against which they had fought so hard.

**2003: A slow start**

Once it was accepted by the executive managements of both institutions that they had no option but to comply with the dictate of the Minister – although as late as May 2003, Figaji sent a four-page letter to President Thabo Mbeki imploring him to stop the merger – joint meetings began and a framework was slowly developed. From the beginning of 2003, the merger proceeded roughly in accordance with a set of milestones preset by the Ministry, while staff and students waited, wondered, and worried.

Perhaps because the merger was externally imposed, there was no real reflection on what internal experiences might exist in relation to institutional mergers. This was surprising, given that Cape Technikon had recently absorbed two colleges of education and thus gained teacher-training campuses in Mowbray and Wellington. According to a senior manager in the Cape Technikon Education Faculty:

> We have already been through a merger ... Maybe this is one reason why my staff and I are not so interested in this one. It’s already been a battle to get people to recognize that Cape Technikon offers education – people hardly know about the incorporation of the training colleges into our Faculty. That first merger/incorporation process has not ever been documented. There is still lots of unfinished business to deal with and complete lack of reflection on what has already happened. I can talk at length about the previous merger. Nobody has asked us
about the lessons we have learned about merging. I am sitting on a merger within a merger, and the first one has not yet been resolved or evaluated. There has been little consideration and recognition of what it takes to work with a merger and build a faculty. Nobody has ever expressed any interest in it.

[The main lesson learned was] it is important that people think things through. Some of the key issues have been about staffing and having different campuses and the toll that it takes on your resources. Running a course in two or three places is a whole different ballgame to running it in one place. It affects management capacity, ability to meet, to plan, collegiality and costing. Running between campuses seems to cause a lot of problems. It costs a fortune and it takes a lot of time to run up and down ... and it is important to make people feel that they belong — especially those who operate at a distance from the main campus. These people don’t have a real sense of belonging. They need to feel proud of their institution.

By March 2003, the two institutions had established a Joint Merger Task Team (JMTT) of their respective rectorates to take the unpopular task forward. JMTT then proceeded to establish eight (later increased to twelve) additional task teams to start to work on plans for bringing areas of operation of the two institutions together, in fields such as finance, human resources, student services, information communication technology and academic matters.

A senior manager at Cape Technikon had the following impression of the merger work in May 2003:

At the moment the issue is about the new name and postal address. I don’t know yet really know how the process will work. I think that in the next two to three months, there will be a need for a plan and other kinds of arrangements will need to be in place. At the moment I don’t really do anything [merger-related] unless I’m told to do it. At the moment very little is happening — there seems to be a kind of apathy — the merger is being pushed to the back of people’s minds. But there has been some informal liaison between some students and some staff members from the two institutions.

The issue of the name of the new institution was to become a major stumbling block in the middle of 2003. Below are two perspectives — first from Pentech and the second from Cape Technikon:

[1] The JMTT first met in January over the name, discussing the major considerations and what the best way forward would be. I initially thought the issue was basically resolved ... The naming committee [at Pentech] was broadly representative of the institution, including
students unions, academics and from the rectorate ... The committee reported directly to Council, it didn’t require an endorsement from the rectorate. At Cape Technikon the process involved more of a mass meeting, followed by the rectorate basically making a decision. The Pentech naming committee came up with sound, convincing arguments and there was good reason to support their views. Some of their ideas and the rationale for them had not been initially considered by me or other senior individuals, in the initial talks. The two institutions had from the start agreed that the name and address should not enforce perceptions of a take-over by one institution. They agreed further that if the name was associated with Cape Technikon, the address should be in Bellville, as a trade off, and all accepted this proposal. In the end, Pentech’s naming committee felt there should be a break with the past and a name like Cape University of Technology should not be accepted. I feel that there were strong reasons for the name Ikapa [University of Technology] and our Council believed it made a lot of sense. Cape Technikon’s Council approved the name, ‘Cape University of Technology’. I thought it wasn’t a major issue but suddenly it was becoming more complex. Cape Technikon’s Council wanted the rectorates to meet and resolve the issue. At the meeting we saw differences in internal processes. Cape Technikon could not understand why Pentech’s rectorate did not intervene and make a decision. There were insinuations about the role of leadership at the institution [Pentech].

[2] One of the most important milestones we met was regarding the decision for a name for the new institution. The JMTT met four times over this one issue. We decided to choose a name that could be ‘easily branded’ and thought that ‘Cape’ had a particular flavour. It is easily recognizable throughout the world, but Pentech saw it as being too close to Cape Technikon’s name. Pentech suggested the name ‘Ikapa’ in line with a more ethnic tradition. The problem with this name, however, was that it cannot be recognized within international circles. This stage of the merger project was a rough ride, and I anticipate more difficulties to come.

In the end, the committees compromised on the name Cape Peninsula University of Technology, which was accepted by the Ministry. In acronym-savvy South Africa, this turned out to be a somewhat unfortunate choice. As one newspaper cheekily headlined: ‘Kaput – before it’s off the ground.’ Once the tongue-in-cheek version of the acronym ‘kaput’ began to gain popularity on the campuses, staff were ‘strictly banned’ from using it, and were encouraged to say ‘C-P-U-T’ instead.
Perceptions of each other

In this period, staff from both campuses were meeting each other, sometimes for the first time. They also began to accumulate impressions from these first meetings.

Here are perspectives from senior Pentech staff about their new colleagues:

[1] Trust is being built in the JMTT and with the deans but in terms of the rank and file lecturer, as expected, there is suspicion over job security. I am happy currently with co-operation at the level of the deans and the rectorate.61

[2] The matter of staff-student relations at Cape Technikon is a difficult thing. Sometimes decisions are made by staff on behalf of students in a more autocratic manner. Cape Technikon and their students were never involved in the struggle. There was no marching and tear gas there – not like Pentech and UWC. Here, the struggle would be in vain if students weren’t currently involved in decision making processes … my personal perception is that Cape Technikon students don’t challenge management and their decisions.62

[3] There is a perception at Cape Technikon that they are taking over Pentech and this doesn’t sit well with us. We want to make it clear to our counterparts that this is a merger and not a takeover.63

Here are perspectives from senior Cape Technikon staff about Pentech staff and the tenor of merger discussions:

[1] My sense is at Pentech there is one person holding all the marbles. In terms of organizational culture, Pentech has a much more top-down approach whereas Cape Technikon has moved along from this mode of operations.64

[2] Our greatest challenge will be to build a common vision. Now, everyone challenges everything because it’s not their idea. But a lot of that will go after January [2005]. It will be one institution, so people won’t bat for Pentech or Cape Technikon.65

The work of the individual task teams proceeded throughout the year. They were faced with daunting and complex tasks. The academic team, for example, had to guide the production of a new prospectus with complete course and fee information for the merged institution by early 2004, so that it would be ready to guide student applications for 2005. The process only began in August 2003; but the prospectus was finalised by April 2004, and was in the process of being uploaded onto the new institution’s website in June.66 The printed version of the prospectus, however, was not ready until November 2004.67
Similarly, at the first meeting of the Information Technology (IT) department heads in March 2003, it was noted that the only commonality between the two institutions’ systems was the programme used for email. In every other case, either completely different software and hardware or systems, or different versions from the same manufacturers, were being used. For example, Cape Technikon had no system of (physical) access control to the campus; Pentech’s card access system was managed by the IT department. Cape Technikon used a system called WebCT for its online learning programmes; Pentech used an open source system developed by UWC. The campus telephone and cellphone network was managed by Cape Technikon’s IT department, but neither one was part of Pentech’s IT system.\(^68\)

By August 2003, the pace of work was heating up. According to a senior manager at Pentech:

> The merger has involved a great deal of additional work. Both institutions opposed the merger and continue to fail to see the sense in merging. A lot of energy was initially invested in opposing the merger, but we have subsequently resigned ourselves to its inevitability … there is huge time and effort involved, and complex issues constantly arise in the process.\(^69\)

Another manager noted: ‘It’s like, “While you are doing these 300 things, would you mind doing 301?”’

Perhaps the last word on 2003 came from a senior manager at Cape Technikon, interviewed in September. When asked to name the major lesson he had learned in the past year of merger work, he replied instantly: ‘Trust nobody.’\(^70\)

### 2004: The rock (tradition) and the hard place (the DoE)

The year 2004 was the one in which the reality sank in at all levels on both campuses: the merger could not be stopped, it was coming. Perhaps the final hope was the post-election replacement in April of Prof. Kader Asmal by Ms. Naledi Pandor as the nation’s third post-apartheid Minister of Education. She was, after all, the Chancellor of Cape Technikon, appointed in 2000. But as Minister, despite the criticisms of the merger process she had voiced as Chair of the Council of Provinces in 2002, Pandor swiftly dashed any hopes of a policy reversal.

The articulation of the inevitable was the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the two institutions in May 2004, committing both to open communication, full disclosure and goodwill in achieving the goals set by the Ministry. It should be noted that all committee work in 2003 had occurred before the MoU was signed; but the MoU simply put the rubber stamp on a fait
accompli, in an atmosphere of mutual resignation. Like other documents that originated from the Ministry, it was vague on details, probably deliberately so.

One of the first documents produced by the Department of Education containing guidelines for merging institutions warned sternly against institutions sidestepping what it called ‘substantive integration’ in favour of fashioning a solution which merely complied with the technicalities of relevant legislation. Quoting from the Ministry’s June 2002 merger proposals, it reiterated:

…it is important to emphasize that substantive integration involves much more than the formal adoption of new policies, procedures and structures. It requires ensuring that the new policies, procedures and structures give rise to the creation of a new institution in the full meaning of the term, that is, real integration with a new institutional culture and ethos that is more than the sum of its parts. It cannot be based on the culture and ethos of the stronger partner in the merger process. This would be a recipe for disaster…

What would be the merger model? What would the stages be? What would happen first? Would students and staff have to immediately start shuttling back and forth between District Six and Bellville? Were retrenchments imminent? Would fees increase or decrease? Who was in charge? These questions were on the minds of everyone in the two technikon communities.

How much would students pay?

The issue of setting tuition fees for the new institution was one of the most difficult issues that had to be solved in 2004. Fees strongly influenced student access as well as staff retention, since fees formed a large part of the income of both institutions. In June, a senior manager at Cape Technikon explained the complicated connection between fees, student reactions and staff confidence:

The CT is apprehensive about what may or may not happen. And depending on where you ask the question there is great eagerness to use the merger in a way that does not only create a new super-technikon, but that actually creates a whole new kind of institution ... More relevant, more responsive, more needs-directed. A greater footprint of delivery. In other words, enhanced delivery. A richer teaching and learning environment. Significantly improved operational processes. The benefits of the richness of strengths. I mean, a practical example: at Peninsula Technikon they have invested considerably in information technology [while] we’ve invested in the library much more than they have. So if you put these two things together you have a possible win for the 25 000 – 26 000 students, as we stand now, that could not have
been achieved otherwise. So what I'm saying is that—well depending again on where you ask the question, this is the leadership level, I'd say, there are distinct opportunities to use synergies happening ... the mental mindset is one of excitement about what is possible.

If you go lower down in the organization ... at the worker level, people are unsure about what is going to happen. We know that for instance, the differences in fees will force us into a position where in all probability we're going to have no option [but to drop] our fees if we harmonize [to] a common fee structure. Which we must, otherwise we'll also have a riot! [Fees may fall] to a level below what is probably in the big picture, sustainable funding level for our institution. People intuitively sense that there's a huge risk that ... because of the fee thing and because of what's happening in state subsidization, that we're heading for retrenchments ... Mentally, people are much more apprehensive, they need a lot more reassurance, they don't trust everything that's being said.

... there's also a mentality of hope if we can get the DoE to buy into really making a success of this merger. And to give us the support that is required to overcome these problems. We can deliberately intend on trying to deliver a merger that will be seen as one of the best things that has ever happened in the Western Cape HE environment. But we cannot do it on our own. There's serious concern, possibly even suspicion that the DoE is not into this mindset at all. Funding! There was a meeting with the DoE on Sunday, at which, so it's reported by my Rector, at which they basically said, 'Well why do you need to harmonize student fees? Why do you need to harmonize staff salaries?' ... they're not going to fund these things. So they're basically saying, go ahead and take all the pain that will come with that, but well knowing that in some cases the fees are double on a course-by-course basis. And how do we justify that to our students?²²

He explained that one strong message of the Department of Education, contained in the official 'Merger Guidelines' document, was that the new institution should be solvent within 18 months. But the Department would not pay for the equalisation of tuition fees. It was striking that Pentech fees were generally, but not always, 15 to 150 percent lower than Cape Technikon fees for the same qualification. What should be done? The Department insisted that it would not agree to pay the differential amount necessary to bring Pentech fees up to the same levels as Cape Technikon's. The money would have to come from somewhere else—such as passing the increases along to the students.

Under these circumstances, in financial planning for the new institution, the JMTT was faced with a set of unappetising options:
• Should Cape Technikon fees be reduced? Fee income at Cape Technikon was almost 40 per cent of the income stream. How could the new institution maintain itself, meet a series of challenging new mandates on less money – or, do its planning properly if 40 per cent of the 2005 income of the larger partner suddenly were to become an unknown quantity?

• Alternatively, if Pentech fees rose in one year to match the level of Cape Technikon fees, would there not be justifiable unrest among Pentech’s pipeline students?

• Finally, if the tradition of different fees according to ‘home institution’ were to be continued, students would be paying different fees for the same course and same qualification in one institution. Would the students paying the higher fee not be unhappy? And how did continuing with different fee structures constitute meeting the mandate of the state for ‘substantive integration’? How was that transformative?

He also noted that the Department of Education was sticking to the merger guideline principles that fee harmonisation, and other potential costs such as paying staff overtime or hiring new staff to cope with increased workloads, were not considered to be reimbursable. This resulted in a stark contradiction:

... the costs of merging ... to a very large extent according to the DoE guidelines and the position of the Department, [are] costs that should be carried by the institutions as normal operational expenditure. Those costs are not trivial either. So there’s more than normal demand ... People are taking piles of work home, people are meeting on weekends because there’s no other time for it. And you can expect that only so long, but when you at the same time get the fairly harsh signal, ‘It’s not going to be funded guys, you [are] on your own,’ then there’s bitterness. And also note the implication of what is said [by the DoE]: ‘Why can you not have different staff salaries?’ That’s exactly what was said: ‘Why can you not have different fee structures?’ The guys here have said, ‘But that’s business as usual! And that’s exactly what we understood we should not have.’ They [the DoE] want a substantial, significant, imaginative merger to happen. So are we fools playing this thing, taking them at face value, their statements? From a support point of view, the messages are ‘Guys, its going to be business as usual.’ It’s very demotivating. 73

At mid-year 2004, the basic understanding of the fee problem was the same at Pentech. But the anticipated solutions were exactly opposite: Cape Technikon managers were convinced that tuition fees would fall, while Pentech managers were convinced that fees would rise. According to a senior manager at Pentech:
There are things that will make my Vice-Chancellor angry all over again ... the fees is a case in point. Because although we’ve still got a lot of work to do on the fees to see exactly what is happening, its quite clear that in some cases if we were simply to increase our fees to the level of the Cape Technikon fees, that it would be a big jump for some of our students ... In terms of [the NPHE goals of] 'increased equity of access and redress of past inequalities', I mean, people at this institution just see red when they look at the fees and that kind of objective. Because there’s a clear instance where the merger is going to militate against greater access and redress in terms of the student cohort coming through. Because inevitably the fees are going to rise. Question is, how much they rise immediately and how much perhaps we can phase the increase in over time. But there’s definitely going to be increases of fees at a level which wouldn’t have happened otherwise - had it not been for the merger. 

The fee [harmonization] is certainly one of the major issues and its one that has to be addressed before the first of January ... [Its] a major problem, a complex issue ... We don’t agree with the Department, and we had a meeting with them July last year, and I believe the [Merger] Unit met with the two VCs the end of last week. And from what I understand, that was certainly one of the issues the VCs raised with them, was this discrepancy in the fees. And although the Unit is saying that they haven’t paid any other institutions for that kind of discrepancy, we are not accepting that they shouldn’t be paying. If we go back to the incorporation of the teaching colleges, there’s plenty of precedent there for them to actually pick up the tab for the discrepancies ... I think its something that we will be pushing with the Department. But irrespective of how that discussion with the Department comes out, it’s still a difficult question to say, 'What’s the appropriate level to pitch the fee for the new students coming in?' We are not yet at the point where we can say, 'This is what that fee’s going to be.' It’s going to be difficult to arrive at that ... Of course you could say ‘Let’s just take the lower fee,’ but then the combined institution is losing money compared to what the two separately would have been bringing in. 

And remember that this new institution has said that there will be no retrenchments. We’re looking at a growth policy, we want to redeploy people where necessary once we get to that stage of looking at how we could run things more efficiently and so on. But if you are losing income, then something’s got to give somewhere. So one wants to avoid the situation of being forced into retrenchments when you are trying to pursue a policy which said we’re not going to have retrenchments.
There is consciousness in the JMTT that this [fees issue] can't be allowed to drag on much longer. Soon they'll have to start negotiating with the students on this pipeline component [for an inflation-related increase] ... We had a three-year agreement with the students but that expires this year ... We have a tradition of negotiating fees with the students, which all institutions don't have. And that's possibly one of the reasons why our fees are generally a bit lower than most. 4

There were at least two further twists in the tale of the fee levels. The JMTT sent a document to the Department of Education in September outlining a plan which would have the Department paying for fee harmonisation over a four-year period. This, it was suggested, would cost an additional 56 million rand.

Evidently, the Department rejected this out of hand, because the JMTT went back to the drawing board. By November, with students accepted and ready to register for the 2005 academic year due to commence in less than three months, there was a new plan with two major components:

• Pipeline students on both campuses would pay inflation-related increases negotiated with the respective SRCs: five per cent at Cape Technikon and seven per cent at Pentech.

• The fees for first-time entering students in 2005 would depend on where the successful applicants indicated on their admissions application that they wanted to study. There would be one fee per course, common across the new institution. New students registering at the CPUT Cape Town campus (ie Cape Technikon) would pay the new common fee. However, new students registering at the CPUT Bellville campus (ie Pentech) would receive a rebate which would ensure that the final amount they would pay would be no more than 15 per cent higher than the old Pentech fee for that course. In 2005, the rebate received by these students would amount to up to 75 per cent of the increase in fee costs. If these students passed their courses, they would receive the fee rebate at that level until they graduated. They would lose the rebate if they failed courses and had to repeat a year. The 2006 student intake at the Bellville campus would receive a rebate of up to 50 per cent rebate on the fee increment. Eventually in this way, it was planned that the Bellville fees would match the Cape Town fees.

The rebate was an idea that the Pentech contingent fought for, and it came directly from a sense of needing to defend the interests of disadvantaged students as far as possible in the new institution.

This elaborate compromise was flawed. First, new students would pay different fees based on the campus they had applied to; but the fee structure had not been set by the time the application form was prepared. Students therefore did not know that if they applied to one campus they would receive the benefit
of a rebate, and if they applied to the other, they would not. This was surely inequitable.

Second, the rebate was not based on an individual needs assessment. The new institution did not have the capacity to needs-test 26 000 students in the space of a few months – if at all, as needs testing had never been part of the admissions infrastructure of either campus, and no policies or expertise existed. All first-year students in 2005 who applied to and registered in Bellville received the rebate – regardless of their actual level of need. This meant that students who were in the pipeline at the Cape Town campus would continue to pay higher fees than their counterparts at the Bellville campus; and 2005 first-year students who enrolled at the Cape Town campus would also pay more than they would had they enrolled in Bellville. It should be recalled at this point that the student enrolment at Cape Technikon in 2004 was approximately 30 per cent African. The institutional answer to this problem was that historically, some students had expected to pay higher fees for their entire educational career if and when they had applied to Cape Technikon or the Cape Town CPUT campus, and so it was legitimate that they should continue to do so. It could have been argued, however, that it would have been a reasonable expectation that a transforming institution dedicated to the goals of the National Plan of increasing access and applying the principles of redress would not discriminate between students in the same institution (CPUT) based on financial legacies of the past, and that in fact this compromise simply perpetuated aspects of traditions of inequity.

As of the final interviews conducted in November-December 2004 for this project, anxiety levels were high over whether or not the two still-separate computer systems on the two campuses would be able to load the complicated fee scheme in time for registration in 2005. In a hypothetical situation, four students studying for the same qualification could pay three different fees:

- A pipeline student, and a new student registered at the Cape Town campus, would pay the old Cape Technikon 2004 fee + five per cent. This would become the standard CPUT fee.
- A pipeline student at the Bellville campus would pay the old Pentech 2004 fee + seven per cent.
- A new student at the Bellville campus would pay the CPUT fee minus (up to) 75 per cent of the increase over the Cape Technikon pipeline fee.

Thus, the two systems on the two campuses would have to be able to load and compute at least three different fees for exactly the same course, and correctly assign the correct fees to particular students. The task would also be complicated by further rules for students who might be repeating some, but not all, of their courses.
Table 8. Fee increases and differentials in two first-year diplomas at CPUT, 2005

### National Diploma in Graphic Design

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Communication Design I</th>
<th>Design Techniques I</th>
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<tr>
<td>2004 Cape Technikon fee</td>
<td>R3 021</td>
<td>R2 865</td>
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<td>2004 Peninsula Technikon fee</td>
<td>R1 140</td>
<td>R1 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 CPUT fee</td>
<td>R3 180</td>
<td>R3 010</td>
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<td>2005 CPUT fee for Cape Town campus</td>
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<td>R1 320^a</td>
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<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<td>Bellville fee increase, 2004–2005</td>
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### National Diploma in Food Technology (first semester)

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<th>Course</th>
<th>Chemistry I</th>
<th>Physics I</th>
<th>Quantitative Methods I</th>
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<td>2004 Cape Technikon fee</td>
<td>R1 360</td>
<td>R1 220</td>
<td>R1 240</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004 Peninsula Technikon fee</td>
<td>R1 090</td>
<td>R1 070</td>
<td>R 820</td>
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<td>2005 CPUT fee</td>
<td>R1 430</td>
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<td>R1 310</td>
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<td>2005 CPUT fee for Cape Town campus</td>
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<td>R1 290^d</td>
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<td>Bellville fee as proportion of Cape Town fee</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellville fee increase, 2004–2005</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The 2005 fees came with the proviso that they were 'only a guideline' and students would be provided with a formal statement of fees upon registration. In addition, some courses on each campus had additional levies and charges for items such as specialist materials and equipment.

a R3 180 less rebate of R1860
b R3 010 less rebate of R1690
c R1 430 less rebate of R170
d No rebate
e R1 310 less rebate of R360
This table shows that the merger led directly to higher fees across the board, especially for new students studying on the Bellville campus. The annual inflation rate in 2004 was between four and five per cent; from 2005 onwards, new Bellville campus students were to pay more, and well above the rate of inflation, for exactly the same education that had always been offered at Pentech. This was because (see below) the merger plan called for changes in the actual teaching programmes to begin potentially only after 2007.

The students who would pay the smallest increase were those already in the pipeline at the Bellville campus: they would pay the generally historically lower Pentech fee plus only an additional seven per cent inflation-related increase.75

What would be the ‘merger model’?

The two institutions, like their counterparts around the country, were presented with a loose framework of merger governance – but one to which they were legally bound – by the Minister and the Department of Education. The first step was to appoint an interim council for six months, which would govern in tandem with the JMTT and existing management on both campuses until the legal date of the merger. The interim council would also appoint an interim management to take over at the new institution on that date (in this case, 1 January 2005). Permanent management positions would be advertised and filled during the course of 2005, and a permanent council appointed.76

This framework was silent, however, on how the actual merging of campuses, educational programmes, and campus operations should occur.

By 2004, there were some precedents in the country about ‘how to’ and ‘how not to’ go about merging. The examples of the troubles of the Durban Institute of Technology were fairly well known, as well as those from campuses such as the merger of the Universities of Natal and Durban-Westville. From these examples, popular wisdom became that it was best to attend to the ‘back office’ issues first: don’t try to merge without first dealing with differences in staff conditions, computer systems, budgeting, and so on.

‘Do the back office issues first’ became the buzz phrase on the two campuses. To some extent, the common sense of this approach might have disguised an impulse – dating from the days of resistance to the merger – to stave off actual change in the core business of the two institutions as long as possible. Thus, in March 2004, a communique outlining a four phase merger process was sent out to staff and students at Pentech:

Phase 1, January 2004 – December 2004: research staff numbers and conditions of service; bring together Information Technology, Human Resources, Finance operations and application/registration procedures in time for January 2005.

Phase 3, July – December 2005: New Council appoints new permanent Vice-Chancellor; new management structure and new faculty structures approved. New management structure and existing available staff are matched and appointed.

Phase 4, January – December 2006: New faculties cluster themselves with their new Deans and establish an operating system that will cater for the faculty operating on more than one campus; proposals will be submitted for consideration to rationalise and/or expand faculty programmes.

This clearly indicated a very slow and gradual merger process – one in which, potentially, no change would occur in teaching and learning programmes until at least 2007. Any such changes could even take longer, depending on plans to be submitted in 2006. Governance and management structures and personnel, however, would be ‘modernised’ by the end of 2005. In addition, the document clearly envisaged the possibility of multi-campus faculties – implying that common-sense physical integration of teaching (for example, all courses in the engineering faculty to be taught at Cape Town or Bellville) might not occur at CPUT at all.

Budgeting as an example of different institutional cultures: ‘Value for money’ vs ‘money for value’

Budgeting processes, deeply rooted within the ways that both institutions operated, were substantially different. This level of organisational culture displayed both clear links to the historical past, and suggested challenges which might arise in future functioning.

At Pentech, budgeting across the board was a tightly controlled process in which a ‘value for money’ approach prevailed. It is possible that the roots of this lay in the old restrictive procedures that the institution had to follow in the pre-autonomy days, under the Coloured Affairs Department (as described above). At post-apartheid Pentech, staff had to motivate for all expenditures, and fee increases were directly negotiated with student leadership. When asked how it was possible for Pentech to have built up impressive financial reserves on the lowest fee base in the country, a Pentech executive replied:
I think we learned an interesting lesson from our students in this regard when we were negotiating fees. We [management] used to always hold up everybody else and say, 'Look where their fees are. And look how far we are behind!' And our students said, 'Management of this sort of stuff is not about how far you are behind, it's about what you do with the resources you get. It doesn't mean they [other institutions] are right, we [Pentech] could be right.' And they were saying that ... [Pentech] can run with these fees. And other people, who were charging these high fees, maybe they're just demanding fees for luxuries that they don't need.

He continued to explain how the institutional budgeting process, for income expenditure, worked:

We've been pretty tough about certain things: [we say] that you're only going to purchase things that you really need. Our staff ... deans and everybody, understand the philosophy of this institution – that we don't waste money; that we don't buy things that are nice to have; and that if you're going to buy, for example, an electron microscope, which costs two million, then you've got to tell us first why you can't use the one at UCT. So we won't just purchase because it's good to have – we look at all the parameters, that's the first issue. The second issue is we don't allow people to carry over money from one year to the next, unless there's an absolute watertight rationale for that. Third issue, if you have budgeted for 'x' and you're only going to buy it a week before the budgeting and purchasing cycle closes, we're not likely to allow you to buy it, because the question would be, if you budgeted for it and you needed it, why could you do without it for nine months? And so, in terms of purchasing and budgeting, we've been very controlled. 

This can be contrasted with the description of how fee levels were set at Cape Technikon, where a market-oriented, 'money for value' approach prevailed. One senior manager explained this approach:

Our technikon has offered a good education at R6 000 – 10 000 per year. Fees must be value-related. Suppressing fees may be politically popular but in the long term it is regressive ... This is a tense moment with fees. A huge amount rides on it. The fee level will determine if CPUT can be innovative and pursue strategic objectives. You know, to do things like increase throughput, you need support interventions, which cost money. Otherwise you'll be hampered.

The Pentech people are standing strongly on wanting to perpetuate their historical position as a cheaper alternative, where the same course is offered for two-thirds of the cost at other institutions, in order to
gain access to that part of the student market that otherwise wouldn’t have access to higher education. We all see the merit in that — but an institution also has to be viable, in business terms. If you need an income of ‘x’, you have to generate that.

He went on to describe how fee levels were set at Cape Technikon:

There may be some Cape Technikon fee levels that are just too high. Our deans have historically had leeway in setting fees, and it hasn’t really always been underpinned with research. An increment is put on whatever was charged in the previous year — so sometimes fees creep up to where they may be higher, or the highest on the market.

We set our fees like they do at UCT. Deans have freedom. They can introduce levies. For example, if the design department says every student needs an Apple Mac, a computer levy of, say, R200 per student is introduced. Or it can be a levy for notes (readers). The core fee is incremented by an adjustment for inflation, and then the deans can argue for levies on a per course, or per subject basis. Levies are interesting. They don’t go into a central pool, they get paid directly into an earmarked project account. It’s tempting for deans to implement levies … Maybe in the future all special levies will be abolished and integrated into a general fee. That would force the deans to bring projects back into normal, central decision-making procedures. With the existing system, they can escape rigorous investigation and operation in a business-planning mode … Now [for example as a dean] I can argue for levies to supplement my faculty budget. That way, I’m not battling for a slice of the central cake. It’s a transparent process but no one will argue with me if it’s needed, if it’s not a hit on the students and if it’s for a reasonable period of time.

Levies can be used to pay back a [project] loan from the central funds. Funds are also raised in other ways, like by going to the private sector.

This flexibility helps to make our whole system work.

Our two institutions have fundamentally different budgeting procedures. Here its open and transparent — anyone can look at anything. The deans’ submissions are open and accessible, and requests are moderated. At Pentech it’s a radically different procedure. 79

This brings us to another area of cultural difference: what did democratic decision-making mean on the two campuses?
Democracy in action: Depth or breadth?

This interesting issue can only be sketched out in a preliminary way on the basis of current project research. But indications are that very different decision-making styles prevailed in the two institutions.

In post-1994 South Africa, democracy belongs to all. Staff on both campuses perceived that they were operating democratically; but in practice, these ‘democracies’ operated very differently. The perspectives below do not demonstrate right and wrong – instead, they illustrate some of the intriguing differences when people from the two campuses asserted enthusiastically that the way decisions were made on their campus was democratic.

**Democracy at Pentech**

For example, according to a Cape Technikon manager:

> The two institutions have very different decision-making styles. In my personal opinion, Pentech is more autocratic and people are sometimes fearful. At Cape Technikon we have a more participative management style. For example, in the JMTT and task teams: to what extent did the people sitting in those task team meetings have the authority to make recommendations? The Pentech people couldn’t always contribute equally in the meetings because they always had to check back with their structure and test different positions. It was very time-consuming. The Cape Technikon people had more power delegated to them.\(^8^0\)

On the other hand, a Pentech manager said about his institution:

> Pentech has sought to produce a home away from home for staff and students, attempting to give lifelong skills such as discipline, to all concerned. Joint responsibility and accountability are integral to this institution’s culture, as well as a belief that decisions should not be made on behalf of others who are directly affected. There is a culture of inclusiveness, as staff, students and management are involved at all levels. There is a democratic spirit inherent in Pentech.\(^8^1\)

These two perspectives suggest that decision-making at Pentech could ideally be characterised by ‘depth’ – that discourses ran up and down a chain, but were, at the end of the day, articulated from the top.

**Democracy at Cape Technikon**

The model seemed different at Cape Technikon, as a senior Cape Technikon manager explained:
The ultimate decision-making body is the Rectorate. A common concern is that on this body there is only one academic person, the senior vice-rector for academic affairs, who represents the academic interests of the institution. The other people are HR people, student services, finance, and so on. I am more interested in the term ‘interests’ than ‘culture’ – which interests get foregrounded? I don’t think the current structure provides a platform for academic input. It backgrounds the academic project and places huge strain on that one person; but he also therefore has a lot of control … It is difficult to control the whole system from a central point, it actually turns out to be very laissez-faire as each Dean just does what they want – mostly because there is an absence of clear procedures for a lot of things … Everyone ends up doing their own thing – some faculties are allowed to do certain things while others are not. It’s not possible to pinpoint the procedure, or the committee or the rule that allowed a particular decision to happen. A lot of things get filtered through one individual – and then there are no minutes … where one person carries too much responsibility, it lends itself to contradictions. One the one hand, it is autocratic and on the other its very laissez-faire, and you can just do what you want for an awful lot of things. However, you are never quite sure where you can do what you want, and where you can’t.

On the other hand, another Cape Technikon manager said:

Decision making at Cape Technikon is transparent and involves all top management. There are open communication channels and all top managers are briefed … With the recent restructuring [before the merger announcement], new positions were created and new appointments made. Many positions have been filled by people who had previously worked in a university environment. This was leading to a more collegial way of working and a new dynamic now exists. The recent strategic planning exercises have been very inclusive.

These two perspectives suggest that a decision-making model at Cape Technikon could ideally be characterised as ‘breadth’ – discourses ran laterally at top levels; but perhaps did not always percolate downwards, where a widespread but uncertain laissez-faire was more the modus operandi.

If this differentiation between styles of depth and breadth is at all accurate, it suggests that people on the two campuses would have very different understandings about what would constitute acceptable practice in crucial aspects of operation such as academic standards and structures of consultation, accountability, and communication. Similarly, they would have very different ideas about what might comprise unacceptable practices; without agreement on
what constituted democracy, it is unlikely that people would be able to agree on what, for example, made up autocracy or even unfairness.

One example of possible misunderstandings in decision-making styles might have been a clash over the new logo for CPUT. At some point in 2004, design staff from Cape Technikon came to Pentech for a meeting about a new logo. The visitors came with a design; Pentech staff perceived that they were being spoken ‘down to’ about a final logo, and felt, ‘we don’t do it like that here’. The Cape Technikon staff reportedly went away angry that their work had been rejected. But could this not actually have been more of a clash between depth and breadth, rather than one between perceived high-handedness and perceived stubbornness?

At the time of merger, no new CPUT logo had been unveiled; the new institution’s first letterhead image was of the two old logos, side by side.

**The last days of separation**

In mid 2004, Prof. Brian Figaji decided to retire rather than apply for the CPUT interim Vice-Chancellorship in competition with his Cape Technikon counterpart, Prof. Marcus Balintulo. In August, an ugly spat between Figaji and the two unions representing Pentech staff became uncharacteristically public in a dispute over the amount of money that would be paid to him upon his departure. The unions claimed that staff had been told that retrenchment packages would not be an issue in the new institution, as the merger was occurring in an expansionist model (where any newly redundant staff would be redeployed); and if there were to be retrenchments as a last resort, those affected would be paid according to the merger guidelines of the Ministry of Education: a maximum of two week’s pay for every year of service. The Pentech Council, on the other hand agreed to Figaji’s request for one month’s pay for every year of service, to the tune of ‘no more than’ R2.3 million. The unions were concerned that a bad precedent for management departures was being set, because the payment was portrayed by the Council as a severance/retrenchment package, while in fact Figaji had voluntarily declined to re-apply for the new position; further, the basis for the decision to double the Ministry’s maximum guideline was not disclosed. Figaji’s argument was that his job was implicitly threatened by the decision of the CPUT Interim Council to invite applications for the interim Vice-Chancellorship, and therefore there was no contradiction with the messages that had been communicated to staff.

Historically, Pentech was known for finding ways to redeploy staff, rather than retrenching them and outsourcing services. In contrast to that image of a strong, stable and united institution, therefore, the sad spectacle of the unions and Figaji at odds over his package looked like an implosion in the run-up to the merger. In the context of a decision-making model that emphasised vertical
channels of communication (as above), this suggested that Pentech would be merging without its main protagonist, a prospect which was not relished by at least one senior manager:

The mood of people on this campus is that Prof. Figaji is not going to be part of the institution for the first months [after the merger]. This is a major problem for people at Pentech ... What awaits us? Only time will tell. For the first time, I'm a bit apprehensive. Brian Figaji made certain undertakings and said that he would fight to see them through. We have a nominated interim Vice-Chancellor – Dr. Balintulo. I don't know him personally.88

Milestones achieved before D-Day, 1 January 2005

The pre-merger achievements of CPUT, even before it legally existed, were not inconsiderable:

- The 2005 prospectus was developed and loaded onto a new CPUT website.
- In teaching and learning practice, an assessment policy was agreed on in which Cape Technikon teaching went over to the Pentech policy of continuous assessment (rather than a mainly exams-based system).
- Course outlines, books and exam moderations for first-year courses in 2005 were harmonised across the two campuses.
- The JMTT met throughout in a cooperative spirit.
- Heads of equivalent academic departments from the two campuses met regularly.
- The twelve task teams established by the JMTT met regularly and began to iron out many operational details.
- Applications for 2005 were successfully carried out.
- A new branding strategy was developed with the slogan, 'Some Things Just Go Better Together'.89
- Retirements and resignations on both campuses largely decided who the incumbents for duplicated management posts in the interim CPUT management structure would be. Departures such as those of the Rector, Human Resources director and head of Student Affairs and of the Library at Pentech, and of Cape Technikon's academic vice-rector and three of the six faculty deans meant that there was less contestation over posts than there easily could have been.
• Prof. Balintulo became interim Vice-Chancellor and it was agreed that his main office (along with the CPUT main postal address) would shift to the Bellville campus.

**Milestones not achieved before D-Day**

It should be noted however, that many crucial details remained unresolved before the legal merger date:

• Despite JMTT attempts, a common vision and mission statement was not adopted.
• Information technology systems, budgeting procedures and human resources policies were still separate.
• Student representation structures were not integrated; the new institution would have two SRCs.
• It was still being hoped, as late as November 2004, that the DoE would agree to contribute to the fee harmonisation costs.
• As noted in the March 2004 communiqué, the whole issue of how the six Cape Technikon faculties would be brought together with the three Pentech faculties was left to discussions and negotiations in 2005.

**What kind of institution?**

Woven in between the hard work of the individual task teams and the JMTT, one important question remained unanswered through 2004: would CPUT be different from just a big technikon? Further, what did it actually mean to be a university of technology? Where did the new institution see itself in the higher education landscape of the Western Cape and the country, in relation to other institutions? What, in fact, was its core business?

All these questions came to be summed up in the work to develop a new statement of ‘vision, mission and values’ for CPUT. Many things hinged on the development of a new statement, including educational priorities, the restructuring of faculties, marketing campaigns, branding and logos. However, the JMTT could not develop a vision and mission statement in 2004, because there was no agreement on the basic issues. For example, Pentech’s management felt that the shift to a university of technology was merely a matter of semantics; Cape Technikon’s management, on the other hand, felt that it must mean something substantial regarding a shift towards research and postgraduate teaching. In July, the JMTT minutes reflected this deadlock:

Dr. Balintulo said the agreed process [of developing a statement of vision, mission and values] had not progressed as anticipated at Cape
A senior manager at Cape Technikon mused on the possible difficulties of re-prioritising the educational mission of her faculty:

We have a particular culture in this faculty – a kind of pastoral approach to working with students. There’s a lot of engagement, a lot of effort with students. We see them as human beings, we help with crises, etc. But that doesn’t happen so much at a university. What will happen when we become a university of technology? If there is more emphasis on research, what about looking after students, taking them on outings and so on? That will change in a university of technology. There must be an acknowledgement that this will change; and the good pastoral side of our work will not get the attention it deserves. Promotions will become dependent on writing and research. But the pastoral work is also important for student development. Students drop out because of non-academic things – so if lecturers aren’t there to listen and help, it will impact on student success. Becoming a university of technology could become a reason for academic staff to pay less attention to student life; we could lose out on these positive aspects of institutional culture.

I think at Pentech, now, they have an attachment to similar values. We will all gain something, and lose something. 91

In November, a senior manager at Cape Technikon reflected on the operational difficulties of not having a stated vision for the new institution:

We [in the JMTT] didn’t finalize a vision. They [at Pentech] have a different formulation, that [CPUT] shouldn’t tamper with their technikon vision. We feel it is necessary to accelerate postgraduate research. But we will park the vision until next year. Now, there’s no logo – there’s no point to doing that unless there’s a final vision and mission. Here and there in the two institutions you find people like the vision and mission that exists now. So a new one will have to wait.

... We never envisaged a merger with any other institution. It was quite a big shock to us – we never had the foggiest idea. It was quite difficult for the Pentech guys to accept it, too. They resisted for about a year. But now they are supporting it; you can’t resist endlessly. In general, there’s no resistance now [on either campus]. Maybe you get a dean here or there who won’t want to move. It’s going to be a problem to relocate expensive fixed equipment and specialized
labs. Maybe we will come up with a structure that has a dean on one
campus and a deputy dean on the other. Maybe we will look mainly
at the departments that are easy to move. All these will be the difficult
decisions: new structures and what will need to be relocated. But vision
and mission come first.\(^9\)

**Last hurrahs**

In October, Cape Technikon threw a glittering, no-expense-spared dinner for
staff at the Cape Town Convention Centre, to say goodbye to the institution
as it had been. In contrast, a more subdued Pentech, with a departing rector
alienated from his staff, held the traditional long-service award celebration and
sponsored the production of a booklet about the institution’s historical journey
entitled, ‘Peninsula Technikon Remembers’.

**Conclusion: Was this a transformative exercise?**

The staff interviewed for this chapter were unanimous: carrying out the mandate
of the Ministry to merge involved a great deal of work but it did not add up to
their ideas of transformation.

[1] In terms of [student] access [to higher education], this is regressive
not redressive.$^9$\(^3\)

[2] If the Ministry thought our institutional profiles needed
transformation, it had already happened. The stereotypes of the two
institutions were not correct. This process was unnecessary. That’s my
opinion, absolutely. Transformation is about the people in the under-
represented groups. That’s why our VC opposed the merger as he did
– vehemently. Yes, he was representing the view of our campus. The
Ministry should have merged UWC and Stellenbosch. That would
have been transformation.$^9$\(^4\)

[3] This is not transformation because the Ministry didn’t look at the
realities of implementation. How will this bring about greater staff and
student equity, and greater access?$^9$\(^5\)

Some good things are happening – thinking about what it means to be
a university of technology is a good thing, it gets people to think about
things like the curriculum. But then, that was happening anyway.
Couldn’t we have carried on without the huge trauma of institutional
restructuring? Maybe we could have had even better discussions about
our curriculum. We haven’t even looked at the institutional plan
this year. We could have spent every second Friday on that. Then, transformation would have been just as good without worrying about things like logos. Maybe being forced into this has made good things happen but they could have happened anyway with good leadership. Improving our curriculum, responding to the market and to the needs of society – now we have less time to look at those things.96

Our project research ended at the end of 2004 – just before the two institutions formally became the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. But since a merger is a process rather than an event, some observations on the first stages of the CPUT journey can be ventured.

The two years of preparation for the merger of Pentech and Cape Technikon were fraught with contradictions – most of which were due to the inconsistencies in the Ministerial mandate the institutions received. For example, the Ministry emphasised that it was crucial that two institutions treat each other as equals at the same time that it cited their existing inequalities as reasons for merging them.

Second, the fact that the merger came as a complete surprise to everyone on both campuses meant that there was no soft landing for the Ministry’s decision. It provoked opposition and resistance from all quarters. The legacies of this opposition could be discerned throughout the pre-merger phases, in areas of development such as the slow merger plan, the inability to forge a new vision and mission statement for the new institution – superficially symbolised in the way the branding logo continued to emphasise two separate entities tied together.

Third, the decision of the Department of Education only to reimburse technical costs of merging rather than also include the inroads into recurrent expenditure that were eaten up by merger work, and the all-important cost incurred in harmonising fees, meant that the institutions had to consume substantial amounts of their own resources – mainly human capital – to do what they had been forced to do. In this sense, the pre-merger period weakened both institutions.

Two of the goals of the National Plan were that institutions should achieve greater access and redress, and new institutional types should be created in South African higher education. As reviewed in this chapter, in the years between the announcement of the merger and the actual legal joining of Pentech and Cape Technikon on 1 January 2005, decisions were made which seemed to militate directly against the achievement of these goals. In terms of access, it can be stated unequivocally that the decision to merge led directly to a substantial increase in fees for Pentech students and therefore – in the absence of any new bursary initiatives – to a decrease in access opportunities to higher education for disadvantaged students. It must be noted that those fee increases would
have been even higher without the determination of Pentech staff to defend the interests of disadvantaged students as much as possible. Even so, this defence led to other contradictions around issues of access and equity, in the face of the intransigence of the Ministry. For example, further research is urgently needed to find out whether pipeline students at the Bellville campus who failed a year and were presented with a demand for much higher fees in order to re-register (having lost the rebate advantage), simply dropped out of the system, or managed somehow to source additional funds to continue studying.

In terms of the creation of new institutional types, the jury is still out. To achieve this goal, the CPUT will have to become more than the sum of its parts. There are some hopeful signs. Cape Technikon developed experience in scenario planning with its Future Options Group – for example, envisioning what a ‘university of technology’ might be and might be able to do. Pentech also developed a vision of a future growth path of itself as an ‘MIT of Africa’, in which students from all walks of life would have access to a wealth of opportunities.

But integrating and developing these visions, planning for and implementing them sensitively and creatively, will surely require that differing aspects of institutional culture such as decision making, and myriad other operational procedures, be systematically addressed. New CPUT ways of doing things must be developed. In this regard, the delays in developing something as basic and fundamental as a vision and mission statement for the new institution at the birth of the merger suggested that numerous, serious challenges lay ahead.