



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

THE PRINCIPAL'S STATEMENT TO SENATE

Since the last meeting of Senate a group of colleagues and I have been making presentations to various units of the university on the upcoming HEQC Institutional Quality Audit. I have appreciated the devotion that the colleagues have given to this task, and indeed, I have learnt a lot from the information provided about the university. Once again, the Self Evaluation Report has been published and submitted to the HEQC for their preparations for the Quality Audit in August. I have taken time to study the report and I am amazed at the amount of detailed information available on Unisa, and the meticulous care with which data is presented and analysed. I have also taken note of the candour and critique presented about our strengths and weaknesses as an institution. As a one-volume study on Unisa I recommend that members of Senate should afford themselves the privilege of reading the HEQC Self Evaluation Report which should be available for general distribution soon. I wish to thank Prof Wendy Kilfoil and her team once again for masterminding this effort.

I begin this report by making reference to the HEQC Report at one level in order to raise our awareness of the importance of the HEQC Quality Audit scheduled to take place in August. At another level, I do so in order to raise general awareness about the importance of Quality at all levels of the operations of the university. Consciousness about Quality means that we would be advancing the value of Excellence enshrined in our Mission and Vision Statement. Wherever we have given the HEQC presentations, we have made it clear that the overall purpose of our effort was to look beyond the HEQC audit and to seek to embed Quality into every aspect of our institutional operations. Nonetheless I urge cooperation with Ms Liana Griesel and her team in the

preparations being undertaken, in their programme of awareness raising, in their communication and overall ensuring a state of readiness across the institution.

Besides our briefing sessions on the HEQC Quality Audit, perhaps more significant have been the Intundla Extraordinary Management Lekgotla, 11-15 May and the first-ever Unisa Summit 2008 held at Velmoré Conference Centre on 17 June. The Intundla Lekgotla was aimed at ensuring coherence and better coordination in the Institution, and especially, at addressing lapses and loose ends and bringing closure to critical initiatives like Business Architecture, Enterprise Architecture and ODL. It so happened that there was a sense of confusion about these processes and some drift in management terms.

At Intundla we were able to come with a renewed purpose, and we set the processes back on course. For example, it was resolved that Prof Narend Bajinath will from now onwards be the coordinator of the Business /Enterprise Architecture. He will bring together the teams whose tasks have a bearing on these processes and a single institutional process will be developed. It was confirmed that it remains critical for the university, that innovation in systems and processes that work and that enhance efficiencies be developed. In other words it was recognised that the next stage in the Accenture process was necessary. What is vital, though, is that we must resist the temptation to develop systems that further complicate matters, or which make us even more dependent on one service provider. We are aware that delays in this matter have affected important projects like the Smart Card, scheduling systems digitalisation at Documentation, Assessment and Examinations. We believe that these efforts must now receive fresh attention through Prof Bajinath's office.

We also reviewed the status of the ODL Project since the departure of Prof Alwyn Louw. We appreciated the work being done by Prof Wendy Kilfoil and her team; we confirmed the value of the Power Courses Programme and we established the role of the Institute for ODL in the further operationalisation of ODL. We affirmed the urgency of an institutional ODL Policy and Plan. It was recognised as well that ODL was a strategic intervention at Unisa and that all our operations had to be evaluated according to the extent to which they assist in the provision of ODL learning systems. I am pleased to report that the Senate/Council ODL Task Team has now finalised the

draft ODL Policy, the first draft of which will be presented today. It will also serve at Council next week. It is presented at this stage for general comment, but will be on the agenda for debate and adoption at our August Senate Meeting.

The review of our assessment and examinations processes is continuing. It is, we believe, once again, a critical element of our provision of ODL, and as comprehensive institution. It is also, as we know, key to our understanding of throughput and failure rates. It is my understanding that the task team working with Ms Hannelie Griesel is hard at work. A final workshop is scheduled to take place in August and we should receive the final report by October. Alongside that I am aware that the Pro Vice Chancellor and the Portfolio Academic and Research are continuing work on our institutional identity in the context of the longer term task of curriculum review. Once again, this goes to the heart of our institutional strategy. A conference is being planned in September which should raise the bar on the imperatives of this process for a university like ours, which prides itself on this progressive agenda. I wish to thank Prof Mandla Makhanya for driving this project and to the colleagues participating, I believe that this is an activity that holds exciting possibilities for our academic advancement.

Velmoré was equally exciting. It provided us with a possibility of acquaintance with colleagues in management at all levels of the university, but also with an acquaintance with the matters that preoccupy them as they go about their tasks. From the side of Executive Management we were anxious to create a uniform management ethos across the institution and to ensure team work, and better coordination. It was important that we should be satisfied that managers at the institution at all levels share the common vision and values, understand the policy direction of the university, and are equipped with tools and appropriate orientation to manage effectively to advance these objectives. We wished to address the tendency at Unisa to manage against management. Velmoré was one of the outcomes of Intundla.

I would like to believe that at Velmoré we began the process of enhancing a better understanding of management and its processes and orientation at Unisa. We may not have addressed all the questions that colleagues would have come to Velmoré with. I hope that at least we opened the possibility of entrenching a Unisa management ethos and character. As we said,

we need a new breed of managers – creative, innovative, engaged, caring, professional, collegial, visionary, and loyal to (passionate about) Unisa and its future.

We also identified three tools by which we could become a winning organisation:

- Simplification
- Become a Learning Organisation
- Renew our commitment to Service Excellence and Quality

We had hoped that we would emerge out of Velmoré with specific commitments. That was not to be. What we can say though, is that we have a better understanding of our university and what drives it. I can also say that we have some idea of the calibre of its management corps. We also know, as a result, that we have much work to do, and a long way to go before we can say that we have a cohesive management team. From conversations at Velmoré and since, I have a sense that managers will be more observant and insightful about their staff. They will be able to identify the Isolates, the Bystanders, the Participants, the Activists and the Diehards. Our common task is to build more Participants and Activists out of everyone at the university.

It emerged during conversations at both Intundla and Velmoré that Unisa needed to improve its communications systems. I believe that at Unisa we have a variety of communication media and all are available to all staff at all times. I pay tribute to colleagues at Corporate Communications who are constantly seeking improved means of enhancing communications: watch the new *Focus* Staff Newsletter, and take a browse through the new website!! There are others who complain about the quantity or the avalanche of communication, paper, e-mail, meetings etc. Somehow we need to find a balance to ensure quality communication internally. One thing is clear, in an environment where consultation is a key management tool, where information is readily available; it cannot be that anyone would say that there is no communication at Unisa. I know, of course, that there are many who deliberately avoid communication, by not opening mail, by staying away from meetings, or if they receive communication, as some of the HoDs said at Velmoré, they only open or read communication to correct mistakes!! In any event, I suggest that we all take responsibility for communication: that we share information, and correct wrong or misleading information. We trust that HoDs and Directors now know that they have the responsibility of constantly keeping their staff informed.

On a more operational level, it is exciting to note that building has commenced on the new registration facility at Sunnyside. A coordinating committee is overseeing this core institutional initiative, and it is envisaged that the next registrations in December will take place at the new venue. This venue, coupled with a more streamlined registration process should go a long way towards alleviating the current registration pressures experienced by staff and students, as well as the congestion at the Muckleneuk campus.

I now wish to take this opportunity to announce some changes in the academic management of the College of Human Sciences. Prof Pamela Ryan has moved to the Office of the Academic Planner with a brief to begin consultations towards the development of a Graduate Centre for the university. Prof Ryan's assignment will continue until December 2008. As a result there are consequential changes in the College. Prof Oupa Mashile takes over from Prof Ryan as Acting Deputy Executive Dean, and Dr B Zawada takes over from Prof Mashile as Acting Director of the School of Art, Education, Languages and Communication. Dr LA Barnes becomes Head of the Department of Linguistics. At the College of Science, Engineering and Technology, Prof Carol Summers has resigned as the Director of the School of Science. Dr IG Moche, Senior Lecturer in Mathematical Sciences has been appointed Acting Director until a substantive appointment is made. Prof P McGrath has also resigned as Director of the School of Engineering. Ms F Samadi has been appointed Acting Director of the School of Engineering. In the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Dr PN Kayoka has been appointed Head of Department of the Department of Agriculture, Animal Health and Human Ecology.

It is with deep sadness that one has to report (for the record) the death of one of our most senior academic colleagues at Unisa, Prof MA Ferreira. As we all know Prof Ferreira, a member of Senate and previously Director of the Unisa graduate School of Business died tragically in hospital on Monday 2 June 2008. For five years Prof Ferreira guided the SBL to becoming an internationally renowned business school. He especially developed the SBL Africa footprint, established a new MBA programme in partnership with the Open University UK, and, of course, must bear responsibility for the operational autonomy that was approved by Council shortly before he retired from the position of Director of SBL in 2004. The funeral was held at the NG Kerk Universiteitsoord on Wednesday 11 June 2008. I appreciated seeing so many

colleagues from across the university there whose presence indicated eloquently, more than words could say, what a much loved colleague Prof Ferreira was at Unisa. After consultation with Dr David Abdulai, the Executive Director of the SBL, it has been agreed that the university memorial Service will be held at the SBL Midrand on 4 July 2008 at 11:00 am.

N Barney Pitsoana GCOB

PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR

Pretoria, 19 June 2008.