



The State of Durban University of Technology: 2023

10 March 2023

DUT Chancellor, in absentia, Ms Nonkululeko Nyembezi;
Chairperson of Council, who joins us online, Mr Wiseman Madinane;
Members of Council;
President of Convocation, Ms Zama Mncube;
Members of Convocation and our broader alumni;
Members of our Executive and Senior Management teams;
Academic staff – our lecturers and professors;
Staff members from our support services;
Internal stakeholder leaders from the IF and from our Unions;
Members of the SRC, the Student Parliament and the entire student body;
Representatives of our external stakeholders and partners in government/agencies, business/industry and from the broader society;
Representatives of the media;
Distinguished and esteemed guests;
Ladies and gentlemen.

Good afternoon.

I welcome everyone to the 2023 DUT State of the University Address (SOUA). This is the first physical one since Covid-19's lockdown between 2020 and 2022. It is also the first SOUA held both physically and virtually. Ironically, it is thanks to Covid-19 that virtual attendance is second nature now, making it possible for many of our people and stakeholders, internal and external, to listen in this afternoon.

SOUA does three simple things. It looks back and then looks forward. It looks back reflecting on how DUT people performed against ENVISION2030's Strategic Plan whose year 2022 page is our 2022 Extended Annual Performance Plan (EAPP). Secondly, and more importantly, SOUA looks forward providing a peek into our EAPP 2023, which Council approved on 26 November 2022. Thirdly, and given that we have been implementing our strategy since 2020, it takes us from merely *leading* by, to paraphrase Peter Drucker, *doing the right things* that ENVISION2030 is about, but *managing* purposefully and determinedly by *doing things right* based on our plans. In so many ways, therefore, SOUA is a public demonstration of several of our values and principles, including transparency, honesty, integrity, accountability, professionalism, commitment and excellence.

According to the three periods of our Strategic Plan 2030, the period between 2021 and 2023 is our *Different* period. Without being presumptuous, I hope everyone in attendance can confirm that DUT is, indeed, becoming *Different* even before the end of this period. From being *Different* by the year end, we will then move to the *Upended* period between 2024 and 2026. Ultimately, during the last 3 years, 2027 to 2030, which is our *Transformed* period, we will have ample evidence of our contributions towards '*transforming our societies and their economies*'.

When we converged in two of our halls on 26-27 February 2020, we dared to dream. We dared to "*design our unique social compact as a community around our strategy*". We expressed our discomfort with just being good, thanks to Jim Collins. Instead, we expressed our insatiable appetite for greatness. We understood that being comfortable with just being good would stifle our creativity, our innovation and our entrepreneurial flair. We understood that if we were to be comfortable, we would, perhaps inadvertently, "*contribute to the impoverishment of human reality*", just to borrow from Frantz Fanon. Instead, we made a bold commitment to '*contribute towards improving the lives and livelihoods of our people and the broader society*' and to enrich human reality as Frantz Fanon would have.

It is against this goal and commitment that I present this address. In presenting it, I use the logic of our strategy-on-a-page, ENVISION2030. As a strategy predicated on the balanced scorecard, it has four (4) Perspectives, namely *Stewardship*, *Systems and Processes*, *Sustainability* and *Society*.

STEWARDSHIP

The Stewardship Perspective is one of the first two ‘*enabling and effecting*’ Perspectives. It is the most foundational of the four Perspectives and comprises three interdependent Strategic Objectives, namely, *Lived Values*, *Institutional Culture* and *Creativity*.

Lived Values

In 2019, we identified our two DNA strands, namely ‘*people-centred and engaged*’ and ‘*innovative and entrepreneurial*’ that represent the most irreducible inner core of our being as DUT people.

On 26 August 2022 and 19 October 2022, our double helix monuments, representing our DNA, were unveiled at Steve Biko and Indumiso campuses, respectively. They are a visual and physical representation of the DUT DNA that lies deep in the minds and thoughts, in the hearts and souls, in our collective personality and character, and in our behaviours and actions as DUT people.

Again, in 2019, we identified our values and principles, organically and collectively. During 2021 and 2022, we moved with greater zeal from strategy to implementation. At least 25 workshops were held with staff and students as we developed and rolled out our Living Values Framework (LV Framework), predicated on our DNA strands and on our values and principles. At its 17 September 2022 meeting, Council approved this framework. It will, henceforth, guide our minds and thoughts, our hearts and souls, our collective personality and character, and our behaviours and actions.

The LV Framework is a product of this ‘*unique social compact*’ I referred to in 2020 and just above. It is a product nurtured during our Town Hall meetings and various other broad-based engagements that took place in 2019. Then, we collectively chose our values and principles. Then, we trailblazed and crafted our strategy-on-a-page that is the envy of many in our sector and beyond. Then, through a competition, we named it ENVISION2030. It is not surprising, therefore, that this ‘*unique social compact*’ and the LV Framework it has produced have already led to transient outcomes and impacts.

For example, based on our ENVISION2030 Tracker Survey conducted in September 2022, with many impact-oriented ‘Greenfields’ KPIs and measures, the University is doing relatively well in terms of our students’ and staff’s sense of belonging. The largest share of staff (73%) and students (75%) feel they belong to the University, and at 78%, most of our people have affinity with our values and principles. They feel they are part of this ‘*unique social compact*’. They are committed to exhibiting our DNA and to living our values and principles. They are committed to living within the precepts of our LV Framework.

At its 15 September 2022, the Executive Management Committee approved a set of projects and initiatives we call ‘*Big Rocks and Flagships*’, for implementation in 2023 and onwards. Our biggest ‘*Big Rock*’ during the *Different* period is that of innovating initiatives and mechanisms that will ensure we truly live our shared values and principles. Some of the Flagship projects in this respect involve embedding and socializing our behaviour through campaigns, one of which we call the Bring-To-Life Our Living Values and Principles (BTL) Campaign. The BTL Campaign will soon be launched and implemented this year. Several policies and procedures will be aligned to our LV Framework. Our 360° behaviour instrument that is part of our PerMS will be predicated on this framework. Recruitment to DUT will not focus exclusively on qualifications and experience. Candidates will be appointed provided they exhibit as many aspects as possible of our LV Framework.

Institutional Culture

Lived Values and *Institutional Culture* are two sides of the same coin. On the one side of the coin, we have our DNA and our socialised, embedded, shared and lived values and principles. On the other side of the coin are expressions of the other side through the DUT Way that will have taken root, and will, in turn, radiate a new *institutional culture*.

Our ENVISION2030 Tracker Survey revealed deep chasms in levels of cohesion, unity and common purpose among our people. Challenges across race, gender, age stratifications and in our multi-campus system remain gaping. According to Peter Drucker, the late Austrian-American professor and author, ‘*culture eats strategy for breakfast*’. We

must keep focusing on polishing the two sides of our coin.

With insights into where disparities lie, purpose-built initiatives must be crafted by different units to foster cohesion, to break down silos, and to build and strengthen collaboration. There were also challenges regarding embedding DUT principles and values in all facets of DUT governance and management. Fewer than half of the staff thought that DUT fosters an organisational culture of caring, openness, honesty, and fairness and that the institution operates in line with its vision and values.

These challenges notwithstanding, we also have great stories to tell regarding the new *DUT Way* and a new *institutional culture* emerging from it. On 27 and 28 January 2023, our First Years' Orientation Week (O-Week) and official opening at Steve Biko and Indumiso campuses, respectively, had the venues bursting at the seams. The start of our academic year 2023 has been markedly different from previous years. Other universities, no longer DUT, have taken the cup of being the protest capitals of higher education. The DUT Way Lekgotla Dialogue Series took place just this last Saturday, 4 March 2023, with great lessons shared and learned. DUT is proud to have student leaders in 2023 who lead from the front and who are not pushed from behind. They exhibit a level of maturity, honesty, respect, integrity, commitment and excellence not seen in recent years.

We have also noticed improved relations among several internal stakeholders. There is palpable enthusiasm from our Institutional Forum (IF) not only in playing its rightful role to nurture cohesion, unity and common purpose, but to get its hands dirty in implementing many aspects of our ENVISION2030 with resolve and agility. The Labour Management Consultative Forum (LMCF) is now functioning after a long period of disagreement on its terms of reference, on principles of consultation, on notions of cooperative governance versus co-governance and co-management, amongst others. While some organisations are currently at each other's throats on salary increments, our Joint Bargaining Forum met and concluded a deal before the end of December 2022, which has been implemented already as January 2023 started.

Thus, even though, as reported earlier, at the broader institutional level there appears to be deep chasms with respect to cohesion, unity and common purpose, there is demonstrable convergence at stakeholder leadership levels. In 2023, we will design flagship projects that will deepen and sharpen this convergence.

Creativity

Creativity is the bedrock for innovation and entrepreneurship that permeate ENVISION2030. Leveraging our collective institutional creativity, we crafted and presented to Senate at its 22 November 2022 meeting, a revolutionary philosophy of education, which states: "*Our creativity and innovation shapes adaptive graduates that transform society*". It's a philosophy that replaces the old and hackneyed philosophy many universities of technology pride themselves in, which focuses on educating and training for the world of work that is becoming a myth to many of our young people. DUT no longer wants to produce graduates that walk distances looking for jobs as if they are pursuing a mirage. DUT now wants to produce 'adaptive graduates'. This type of graduate is one with 'the acumen to initiate, influence and/or respond to changes in the world' with alacrity and agility, those that will 'transform societies and their economies'.

In 2022, we performed well in introducing divergent thinking in academia. We will pay more attention in management and administration in 2023. We have already introduced some creative ideas such as frugal reporting.

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Systems and Processes is the second of our 'enabling and effecting' Perspectives. *Systems and Processes* breathe life into any strategy, and they are integral to the realisation of a performing, accountable, *Creative, Distinctive and Impactful* organisation. This Perspective comprises three Strategic Objectives, namely, *Innovative Curricular and Research, Digital Environment* and the *State-of-the-Art Infrastructure*. Before I delve into these, let me just report on two people-focused systems and processes that are the lifeblood of everything we do, namely our enrolment this year and our institutional review, alignment and transformation process.

DUT Enrolment: 2023

As of last Friday, 3 March 2023, 30 549 students had been registered against 30 723 students planned and agreed with DHET for this year. That's 99.4% of our planned total enrolment. That we have registered this number at the beginning of March, with minimal disruption compared to previous years and against many challenges associated with the National Student Financial Aid System (NSFAS), is yet another victory for the investment in efficiency of our systems and in our maturity as stakeholders, especially the SRC. I made comments earlier about advances we are making in inserting the *DUT Way* and thereby introducing a *Different institutional culture* across all our internal stakeholders.

Institutional Review, alignment and transformation

Borrowing from Pascal Finette, an entrepreneur of note, people are not a resource, but *'the source of everything we do'*; the source of advancement or degeneration. In 2022, we commenced the implementation of new ENVISION2030 inspired functions and structures that were approved by Council in December 2021. In Finance, Human Capital Services, ICTS, Real Estate and IPME, we now have several highly qualified senior managers. We are continuing with Phase 2 of our organisational review project this year. Our priority and focus for 2023 is to ensure that we re-invest benefits from the new functions and structures in academia. In our Enrolment and Efficiency Plan: 2020-2025, we committed to a reduction in our atrociously high student-staff ratios, amongst other academic commitments.

Having given you a taste of two very current systems and processes, let me go back to our strategic objectives.

Innovative curricula and research

'Innovative curricula and research' are about providing *'curricula that stimulate creativity and innovation that, in turn, generate new knowledge and solutions'*. I preached enough about what this really means at our Senate meeting on Wednesday, 8 March 2023.

Starting in 2020, we have been building capacity in Project Based Learning (PBL) and in Universal Design Learning (UDL) among our academics. These two interrelated approaches to learning are foundational if we are to produce adaptive graduates that transform societies and their economies. Our focus in 2023 is to embark on a path we call *'Teaching and learning re-imagined'* using the groundswell of academic capacity developed. We will give more expression to the word-pair, namely *'creativity and innovation'* in our philosophy of education statement. Curriculum transformation designed to ensure that our programmes align with this our new philosophy and help us to meet national and international imperatives will be the focus.

Digital Environment

'Digital Environment' speaks to *'optimised service delivery and agile, efficient and effective ways of working'*. DUT's current challenges are largely about old, inefficient, rigid, transactional systems that lead to staff losing too much time on system delays and malfunction. They stifle innovation and divergent thinking we seek.

However, we have a turnaround strategy in this respect. The implementation of phase 1 of a new ERP system commenced on 1 April 2022. This phase simply builds an ERP platform in four critical areas, namely Finance, Procurement, Human Capital Services and Student Information. Phase 2, which will start immediately after the end of phase 1 on 30 April 2023, will see us plug in more functionality to this platform.

While our new ERP is being implemented, we have not been twiddling our thumbs waiting for it. We have digitalised several operations, for example, online registration of students, online SRC elections, and some aspects of our procurement and financial processes. Digitalisation does not only end with mechanical/operational systems. Our focus for 2023 is to explore digitalisation in supporting our curriculum transformation. Several technological advancements in Artificial Intelligence, 3-D Printing, sandboxes, gamification, extended reality, virtual reality, simulation and so forth are now at our disposal for this purpose.

State-of-the-art infrastructure

As part of advancing our *'state-of-the-art infrastructure'*, we continued with the implementation of our Long-Term Spatial

Plan: 2020-2040 in pursuit of provision of contemporary working, learning and living spaces. The plan includes construction of new buildings, and it focuses on deferred maintenance of our existing facilities dating back to more than 10 years ago. As a result, several buildings such as Open House, Mansfield Hall, the Library Complex, S-Block, Cane Growers Hall, Ritson Halls, Ritson Blocks G and H, Indumiso Office Block, the Innobiz Centre Block, and many others, are beginning to look and feel *Different*.

Sadly, the construction of our two big new buildings, namely the engineering building here at Indumiso campus and the student centre at Steve Biko campus experienced further delays in 2022 just when they were about 3 months away from completion. I assure you they will be completed soon. On the back of Council's further investment in infrastructure, the demolition of several small old buildings at our Steve Biko Campus will make way for the construction of a new administration block. Several other developments at Ritson campus, including a Health Sciences building and an Innovation Hub will soon be part of DUT's footprint.

At its 26 November 2022 meeting, Council approved for submission to our Minister a uniquely DUT Student Housing Project that will see almost 11 000 student beds (about 35% of our current student population) being provided by 2025 in partnership with NSFAS and the private sector, subject to ministerial approval. This additional capacity will take us much farther towards aligning with DHET's policy on student accommodation that expects 50% bed provision. It will also help to relieve us from so much demand and pressure our students bring to bear on the quality and adequacy of accommodation and from unscrupulous landlords. As you know, almost all our student protests involve student accommodation.

Our security system has remained an albatross for the longest time, exacerbated by the porous nature of our Durban-based campuses. This year, we will see an improvement of our security systems with the installation of new technology systems including biometric and CCTV installations.

SUSTAINABILITY

While ENVISION2030 has a 10-Year horizon, our commitment to a culture of shared responsibility and accountability reminds us that we are merely transient custodians of this public good. Inevitably, we have a duty to preserve it for future use by generations to come. In this respect, the *Sustainability Perspective* comprises three Strategic Objectives, namely, *Distinctive Education*, *Financial Sustainability* and *Green Ecosystems*. It is the first of our two 'influencing and impacting' Perspectives.

Distinctive Education

'*Distinctive Education*' is about 'creating a unique, compelling and a future-oriented living and learning environment'.

In so many ways, what I reported we will focus on under the last two Perspectives are catalysts for such an environment. In fact, when we had a visit from the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation (PCHESI), some parliamentarians commented that they never thought of anything else about DUT other than being the protest capital of higher education. They said they also had been to universities that claimed to have 5* student accommodation. They said, our residences could only be 10*. Our focus for 2023 will be to enhance our co-curricular initiatives in academia, arts, sports, recreation and culture so that we produce *adaptive graduates* with have a holistic perspective about life. The Lekgotla Dialogues like the one I referred to earlier that took place last weekend, the Vuna Leadership Academy, Grow-Our-Own-Timber (GOOT) programmes are part of the arsenal of initiative to nurture a distinctive education at DUT.

Financial Sustainability

To ensure that *financial sustainability* is a reality, DUT lives within our means without incurring budget deficits. Several policies and initiatives assist Council and Management in ensuring this. DUT's Budget Policy includes several budget parameters that guide allocations and provide benchmarks and norms on several big budget items. For example, the 58% to 62% DHET norm for the salary bill versus income from the block grant and tuition fees is strictly adhered to. Salary increments, the biggest item in the budget, are guided by '*Sustainability Principles on Salary Increments*' adopted by

Council in March 2017, with amendments over the years. DUT's resource allocation is guided by an annual *Resource Allocation Model (RAM)*, which ensures fairness, transparency and equity in the allocation of resources across divisions. The University Planning and Resources Forum (UPRF) is a broad-based management forum at which the nexus of planning, budgeting, resources and risk management is in place to ensure alignment among ENVISION2030, the Strategic Plan 2030, our Extended Annual Performance Plan (EAPP), our Annual Strategic Risk Register and many other associated documents.

This year we are making a concerted effort to improve financial services to various internal and external stakeholders. This is in line with implementing our finance function maturity model to transform financial services at the University. Our focus for 2023 is to improve DUT's BBBEE level through various initiatives in enterprise development and other associated ones. We will also be launching a programme to alert student entrepreneurs on the procurement and payment process of the University in line with the revised policy that sets aside funds to support student enterprises. To improve the demand and supply turnaround and link it to better organisational performance, we have developed an institutional procurement plan for the first time.

Green Ecosystems

'Green ecosystems' is about *'making environmental sustainability a core feature in the university's life and projects'*.

The year 2023 will see more greening projects being implemented including the installation of recycling bins and reverse vending machines (RVM). A rainwater harvesting project will be piloted in 2023. The collected water will be used for various non-freshwater requirements. Our students, with the support of staff in academia and in support services, lead the university in the One-Residence-One-Garden (OROG) project. They also run cleaning campaigns and promote energy-saving and water-saving. Several entities, both internal and external are involved in these projects.

In 2022, we conducted a solar feasibility study that involves three sub-projects. Firstly, the viability of DUT procuring a solar manufacturing plant given the opportunity of such a plant being available in Pietermaritzburg. Secondly, we are in the final stages of procurement processes for the design and installation of a 230kw carport system. Lastly, we are almost ready with the design and installation of a 47kw solar photovoltaic system on our S-Block at the Steve Biko Campus. Firm decisions will be taken in the first semester of 2023 in all three. DUT recently participated in a Carbon Literacy for Green Innovation and Entrepreneurship Dialogue Forum. This project sets to investigate how a Sub-Saharan Africa-contextualised Carbon Literacy Tool Kit (CLTK) integrated solution to Climate Change (CC) could be leveraged for Youth Employability and Job Creation (CL4YEJC) in our specific context as a region. There are several initiatives that are planned in this regard, with DUT being an active participant. This project will continue in 2023.

SOCIETY

Everything we have presented above has its goal being to *'contribute towards improving the lives and livelihoods of our broader society'*, and our people, of course. The *Society Perspective* comprises three Strategic Objectives, namely, *Engaged University, Innovation and Entrepreneurship* and *Adaptive Graduates*.

Engaged University

Several DUT units and centres engage with the broader society, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally in critical areas of social change and societal advancement. Areas like energy, water, food security, health and wellness, vulnerable communities come to mind

In 2022, we continued our participation in the *Impact Ranking* exercise conducted by the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*, having started in 2020. For the second year in a row, DUT was again placed 5th among our national universities for the year 2022 and essentially, 1st among universities of technology. The areas where the University is contributing to and is being assessed on include the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 1 (No poverty); SDG 3 (Good health and wellbeing); SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). These achievements are not accidental. We are reaping the rewards of huge investments we have made in the

field of engagement, via our innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives, precisely because we understand that we exist to serve the broader society.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

In just a matter of a few years, we invested resources towards making DUT students and graduates creators of workplaces instead of them being in long queues job-seeking. Our Innobiz Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation continues to attract and graduate several business start-ups run by our students. Given investments we have been making in this field since about 2017, DUT has become an exemplar for many universities in South Africa. I commented earlier that we have gone further to revise our SCM policy to demonstrate commitment to the support of our students' businesses. We also support various SMMEs in partnership with several organisations. Having produced a concept note in November 2022 on the South Africa-Finland Learning Inspired Pedagogy (SA-FLiP), a national project around this concept will be launched and implemented this year by the *Technological Higher Education South Africa* (THENSA), an association of technology-focused universities in South Africa and some parts of Africa. We are in a good position to draw some lessons that will further deepen our successes in the area(s) of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Adaptive Graduates

As commented earlier, 'adaptive graduates' are those with 'the acumen to initiate, influence and/or respond to changes in the world'. Notably, it is also the year that our 2020 cohort of FTENs - the year which marked the genesis of ENVISION2030 - will be graduating in their numbers. Despite setbacks brought to bear by Covid-19 and lockdowns, it is my hope that we have done enough in the past three years to, at least, give them education and skills that will make them adaptive graduates. This cohort demonstrated its resilience and adaptability when Covid-19 forced us to upend how we had been doing things. We will be sending them back to their respective communities with one clear task: go back to 'contribute towards improving the lives and livelihoods of your people', armed with not only your education, skills and knowledge, but also the values and principles of DUT which should lay a foundation for a holistic, ethical, functional and productive member of society.

CONCLUSION

We have been working arduously to build a unique vision and a social compact around it to get DUT to where it is today. It has not been easy. We have had to fight against organised inertia and sabotage, sometimes with the involvement of very senior people in the university and outside. But, owing to the resolve of most of our people to move away from just a good to a great university, we triumphed over what were just ephemeral obstacles.

I must caution that we must not dare become complacent, though. John Wooden, an American basketball coach says: "ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there". Our biggest challenge, therefore, is how we will remain at the top and how we will sustain greatness whenever we reach it.

As we end our *Different* period this year, we end it with a DUT that is remarkably *Different* from what it looked and felt like many years ago. I will not be presumptuous nor make any false claim that I am the only one responsible for this *Different* DUT. Working with several dedicated and conscientious DUT people, the right people, and led by a bold and sagacious Council, we built on the foundation of our predecessors.

I like Apple's 'Think Different' Campaign led by Steve Jobs between 1997 and 2002:

"Here is to the crazy ones...the ones who see things differently ...they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. But, the only thing you can't do is ignore them because they change things...And, while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do."

To the crazy ones and to geniuses in our Council, in our Management, amongst our stakeholders, in academia, in our support services, in our SRC, you have made DUT *Different*.

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