

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

30 July 2024

Dear colleagues

Institutional Restructuring Clarity and Update

The purpose of this communiqué is to explain and clarify the restructuring process that is currently taking place against the backdrop of growing misinformation, distortions and falsifications. Our Living Values Framework (LVF) we all designed and accepted as our behavioural lodestar imposes an obligation on Management to, once again, communicate with all stakeholders, including external parties.

The accusations include but are not limited to a charge that the university has embarked on this process without a foundation; employees have not consulted through their respective unions; the restructuring occurring in the context of major construction which therefore means the university does have funds to sustain the employment of its staff; a decision to retrench 152 employees. The rebuttal on the restructuring has been made through extensive media publicity and 2-day picketing by TENUSA, who have not been part of the formal consultation structure since 4 November 2022. The views expressed by this union have largely been speculative and/or false. Management hereby wishes to contextualise the restructuring and provide a more accurate position on this process.

Reasons for the restructuring

In the 2024 State of the University Address (SOUA) earlier this year, the history and the reasons for this restructuring were articulated. Management draws the DUT community to the following key points:

1. The decision for the need for restructuring dates back to the Council workshop of the 18 November 2016. At that workshop, the major concern was raised about the duplication and confusion of roles resulting from the 20-year merger of two institutions, without a proper rationalisation in respect of the requirements of the new institution, now DUT.
2. The introduction of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system was to adjust and improve efficiencies and shift from the labour-intensive manual processes.

3. The business of the university is to serve our students through teaching, learning and research opportunities. This necessitates that the correct resourcing is provided, including improving our student/staff ratios which would contribute significantly to the student success rates. To achieve this, the costs ratios must be directed at the core business of the university. It is for this reason that the restructuring commenced with the non-academic sector, to shift the costs from those areas to where they are required for the continuity of the business.

Approval of the restructuring and the associated communication

The current restructuring was approved by Council in November 2021. The approved structures were communicated in the university through various platforms, including Pinboard on 20 May 2022, following consultation with the unions at the Labour Management Consultative Forum (LMCF) on 12 May 2022. Each of the Line Management for the areas being restructured had various communication and consultation with staff in these areas. Implementation principles were consulted and communicated during the LMCF meetings of 11 March 2022, 24 March 2022 and 12 May 2022. Following these consultations, the implementation principles were approved by Council on 17 September 2022.

Current Status

The implementation process is currently underway, which included as far as possible the adoption of the 'match and place' principle which considered staff that met most of the requirements to be placed in the new structures. Council, at its meeting of 6 April 2024, approved that Management should approach the CCMA for the s189 consultation process as envisaged in the Labour Relations Act. Staff in the areas where restructuring is taking place were issued letters of notice for the s189 consultation. At no point were staff advised that they have been retrenched and therefore, the assertion to this is false. There are various considerations that must be made by Management before such a conclusion can be made. This consultation has not commenced and to this extent, any retrenchments cannot be confirmed at this stage.

It behoves us to state that we continue to discuss this and many other business continuity related matters in our quarterly Labour Management Consultative Forum (LMCF). More than once, we held special meetings given the weight of matters we are seized with. Ruefully, and in keeping with honesty, transparency and integrity amongst many of our values and principles, we also need to state that TENUISA has not been part of the LMCF, following their refusal to sign the terms of reference of this structure, on 4 November 2022 as previously indicated. We continue to persuade them to return to the forum for we all agree that even though LMCF is consultative in nature, it's an important platform in building our DUT unique social compact.

Following the meeting of the LMCF, which was held on Saturday, 27 July 2024, the parties agreed to suspend the letters issued to staff, subject to a number of processes that were recommended which should be followed with the Line Managers from the referred areas, in line with the implementation principles that were agreed to and the confirmation of a new date, for the CCMA facilitated process with the unions. Additionally, the two unions who are part of the LMCF, NEHAWU and NTEU, have made certain appeals that Management has considered, especially in line with our principle of compassion.

We understand that the current period of restructuring does bring high levels of anxiety and fear. Staff are encouraged to approach the independent Employee Wellness service on the following addresses:

- Tollfree: 0800 004 770
- SMS: 31581
- Email: ewp@lifehealthcare.co.za

Sincerely

DUT Management team