

OVERVIEW: FACULTY AND DEPARTMENTAL RESTRUCTURING

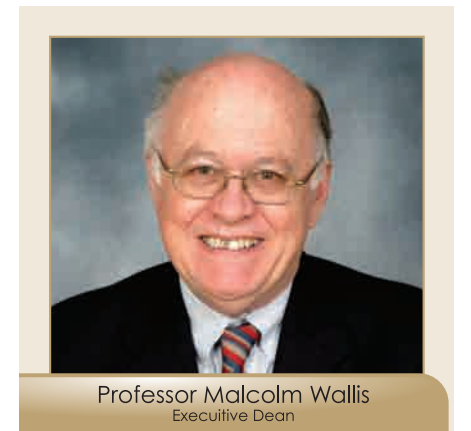
The year was one of substantial change in the faculty. Following the restructuring which took place in 2007, a process was completed by which a new crop of heads of department emerged. In several cases, they also became heads of departments which were new as a result of the merging of the previous ones. Only four of the heads who had been in office in 2007 continued to serve in 2008. This meant that there was a need to mentor the new incumbents who, although generally better academically qualified than their predecessors, were new to the requirements of running departments. Although there were difficulties, the new crop settled down quite readily and brought a refreshing new breeze into faculty management. Because of their relatively advanced academic standing, this was a change which assisted in fostering a faculty which corresponded to the substance of a University of Technology. We have not totally discarded the Technikon legacy but it is certainly fading into less significance for us.

Another feature of this change was that the demographics of our faculty management (its executive committee) changed drastically. As of late 2008, only the Executive Dean was a white male. There were two females (both white), six Indian males and two African males. We were thus able to show substantial progress. Another feature of the new structuring of the faculty was the creation of formal departments in the Midlands. All staff at the Riverside Site, where all our programmes are run, are answerable to a head of department based there. It is too early to make definitive statements but it looks as if the new arrangements pertaining to heads of department are working quite well.

Similarly, we recruited a Deputy Dean, the former head of Hospitality and Tourism, who has greatly strengthened faculty management. He took up his position in March 2008. One of the great benefits of his role is that it frees up the time of the Executive Dean to focus on issues which might otherwise not be given the attention they deserve.

Also important has been the bedding down of the process by which departments were merged. Only three of our departments, (Human Resource Management, Applied Law and Operations and Quality Management) were untouched by the process.

However, it is a pleasure to report that in most cases there was a willingness to make these unions work notwithstanding the reservations that were often expressed, both formally and informally. This showed that our staff embrace the idea of professionalism in an exemplary manner which DUT can justifiably celebrate.



Professor Malcolm Wallis
Executive Dean

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

A major highlight was the completion of the new Hotel School building which is also to be occupied by one of the Applied Sciences departments which also needs state of the art kitchen facilities. As well as offices and lecture rooms, part of the building is a conference centre. Usage of these facilities began last year, important examples being a delegation from the South African Navy and a team of senior public servants from India. All were very impressed, an indication that this is a major asset for DUT and the faculty in particular.

Another was a link with the African Association of Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) based in Nairobi, Kenya. This is very important as it brings together senior public servants and academics from many African states. Of particular importance was a decision taken during 2008 that means that DUT will host the association's annual conference in 2009. The Executive Dean was elected to the Executive Committee of AAPAM's national chapter for South Africa.

In 2008, DUT hosted the conference of the South African Society for Co-operative Education (SASCE). Although not a faculty initiative, we played a leading role in terms of both logistics and the presentation of papers, some of which are to be published. The conference was held at the International Convention Centre.

The Department of Operations and Quality Management contributed greatly to the internationalisation of our work. Two students from Germany registered in the department as part of their German based studies. The outcome of this initiative was that two of our staff visited Germany at the end of 2008, where they did some teaching, carried out research and discussed stronger links. The two universities involved with us are Lorrach and Ravensburg. The signs are that these programmes will grow substantially in 2009.

The Department of Marketing, Retail and Public Relations established a link and completed a Memorandum of Agreement with a leading management institution in India, the Rajiv Academy for Technology and Management. Rajiv now officially recognises us as its international ally. Several of our staff, including some from other departments, were also invited to a conference there which was to be held in 2009.

This department also continued to work closely with the Direct Selling Association to help our students gain experience of direct (mostly door to door) selling. There were some problems to sort out, such as what to do if students do not meet their sales targets, but the programme still has a lot going for it. We expect it to go from strength to strength.

In September 2008, the Executive Dean visited Australia as a member of a DUT delegation. He was able to visit five universities, most of which have emerged from a background not unlike the South African technikons. The visit was both enjoyable and informative. Three main conclusions for the faculty emerged. One is the importance of freeing up the process of importing qualified staff internationally. The next is that the Australian culture of not 'whingeing' and dealing with circumstances as they are has been a major contributor to the success of their institutions. The third is the growing emphasis placed on business ethics, an example of which is the University of South Australia (the other 'unisa' has made important strides in this respect). It is important that such lessons are taken on board by our faculty, and, it is humbly suggested, by the university as a whole.

Other highlights to note are:

- The role of the Department of Governance and Economic Development in promoting Economics Education in Schools.
- The development of links with Namibia Polytechnic which sent two senior staff in the equivalent faculty to visit us in 2008.
- There was the finalisation of an agreement by which we will be assisting the Pretoria based Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy. At least two departments (Governance and Economic Development and Regional Governance and Development) were involved in this achievement. Implementation is due for 2009. It involves partnership with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, North West University and the KwaZulu Natal Provincial Academy within the Office of the Premier.
- The annual conference of the Public Relations Institute of South Africa was organised by our Department of Applied Management based in the Midlands. The conference was held at the Indumiso Site in the Edendale Township in the provincial capital, Pietermaritzburg.
- The Executive Dean undertook a study of education for cooperative societies. He was requested to do so by the Chancellor, Ms Ela Gandhi. Great progress was made which should come to fruition in 2009.
- A Strategic Planning Workshop was held on the south coast in November. It was important in that it created the framework for a faculty development plan. The previous one had been superseded by the fallout from our separation from what is now the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics. The Deputy Dean led this exercise.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

We are pleased to report that the faculty graduation rates rose to 23% at the 2008 ceremony. This was a great advance on previous years as the rate was only 19% in the year before. Unfortunately we are unsure as to the reasons for this success but it is most important that we find out as it should help us sustain and possibly increase this rate so that it is nearer the maximum of 33.3%. Data for students completing in 2008 is still rather raw and not yet fully analyzed. There are indications, however, that we are continuing on progressive paths. Success rates, which are about passing individual subjects or modules, can be referred to by way of illustration. Applied Law improved by 3%, Human Resource management by 3%, Operations and Quality Management by 8%, Marketing, Retail and Public Relations by 5%, and Entrepreneurial Studies and Management by 3%, Hospitality and Tourism by 4%. Only Governance and Economic Development lowered its performance between 2007 and 2008; worryingly, it showed a decline of 7%.

STUDENT ENROLMENT

Despite dire predictions, the faculty was able to rise above the doom and gloom in that we enrolled 5578 students in 2008. This was a drop of about 400 as compared with the previous year but corresponded very closely to the official target given by management following its highly complex negotiations with the Department of Education. We have also seen an unprecedented growth in post graduate enrolments, especially in the Department of Management. In the faculty as a whole, the increase is in the order of 150% on 2007. As the saying goes 'it is a nice problem to have' in that it brings in its train the challenging need to provide adequate supervision and other forms of support.

In the course of the year, the Executive Dean worked on research on enrolment planning at DUT in which he assisted the Deputy Registrar. The study was commissioned by the Higher Education Quality Committee and funded by the Finnish Government. It is hoped its recommendations will be beneficial to DUT in general.

What is also important is innovative teaching. We are making real progress with e-learning (here we must acknowledge the help of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching). About 25% of our staff can now be said to be highly competent in this field. We also place emphasis on taking students off campus, not just for Work Integrated Learning purposes). Tourism and Public Relations students have particularly benefited. We have made little use of the Teaching Development Grant; the exception is a very cost effective project to improve results in Economics.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Several of these have been covered in the highlights listed above. In addition, the following are noteworthy. Several of our staff serve on various accreditation bodies in areas such as Tourism and Public Relations. Our Pietermaritzburg Applied Management students assisted in fund raising in conjunction with the Comrades' Marathon, which is an annual race run between the province's only two large cities, Durban and Pietermaritzburg. One of our Midlands Law lecturers is a member of the South African Law Commission, a great honour, whilst others are also active such as a Lecturer in Public Management at Riverside, who is a member of her municipality's Audit Review Committee. Another staff member assists the Msunduzi municipality with its staff retention strategy.

Another big step forward in 2008 was the establishment of more effective Advisory Boards which play an important part in linking our departments with the relevant industries. One department, Human Resource Management, made progress and established such a body. It had not had one before 2008.

Management students won the 'rookie of the year award' in the Students in Free Enterprise competition. The award was received at the Gallagher Estate in Gauteng.

Much of our external engagement has been mediated through the Business Studies Unit which was not a formal part of the faculty structure even though 99% of its work is in the Management Sciences. It makes a major contribution to the training of managers who are already in industry and has activities all over the country. The issue of the unit's unclear relations with the faculty has been a continuing source of frustration for us. In 2008, only limited progress was made to resolve it but we are still a long way from the integration of the unit into the faculty. In our view, this is the best way forward if the unit is to be academically credible.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

We now have 17% of our staff in possession of doctorates. Each year sees us go forward, both through existing staff obtaining this qualification and through the recruitment of staff at this level. In 2008 we recruited three such staff whilst two obtained doctorates. Over 60% of our staff now have Masters' qualifications and several are close to completion. It can be forecast that by 2010 we will be in a position where less than 10% of our teaching staff will have Honours Degrees or less. This means we are well on the road required of us by the university. We are still not publishing enough although efforts are being made through workshops and other mechanisms. A few of our staff publish in our in-house journal Reboc which is now seen as an exemplar for DUT as a whole. It is now a joint venture with the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, with whom we are pleased to maintain a very co-operative and mutually beneficial relationship.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

This concise report has not given a complete picture. Some initiatives are not known other than to the individuals concerned; some prefer to hide their achievements under bushels. Others may have simply been missed in writing this report.

As far as the Executive Dean is concerned, it has been an honour to serve this faculty for the last five years. I wish to thank all those who have made this possible, all the way from the cleaners to the four Vice-Chancellors under whom I have served. It would, however, be remiss not to mention the staff in the offices of the Executive Dean and Faculty without whose support much, much less would have been achieved.

Professor Malcolm Wallis
Executive Dean

