

# UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



## THE CONVOCATION

### Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Convocation held on the Microsoft Teams Virtual Platform on Wednesday 9 December 2020

#### **Present**

The President of Convocation (Professor Eddy Maloka), The Vice-Chancellor (Professor M Phakeng), the Secretary of Convocation (RN Pillay) and members who had registered and, and whose names are recorded in the attached Appendix I.

#### **Apologies**

Members whose names are recorded in Appendix I.

#### **1. Welcome and preliminary matters**

##### **(a) Welcome**

The Secretary of Convocation welcomed members present; confirmed that the quorum requirements had been met and that the meeting was duly constituted.

The President of Convocation, Professor Eddy Maloka, joined the meeting later due to a technical difficulty with his online connection.

##### **(b) Register and Apologies**

The names of those present are recorded in Appendix I to these minutes.

##### **(c) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on 12 December 2019**

The minutes of the AGM held on 12 December 2019 were approved on a motion by, Dianna Yach, seconded by Keenan Hendricks.

##### **(d) Matters Arising**

There was none.

## **2. Report of the President of Convocation**

The President of Convocation, Eddy Maloka, presented his report. The report is appended to these minutes as Appendix III.

## **3. Vice-Chancellor's Report**

The President of Convocation invited the Vice-Chancellor to present her report, which the Vice-Chancellor did.

The report is appended to the minutes as Appendix II.

## **4. Motions**

The meeting proceeded to consider motions for which notice had been received by the deadline of 18 November 2020, as follows:

### **4.1 Motion on an interim Executive Committee of Convocation**

Emeritus Professor Kit Vaughan, seconded by Dianna Yach had moved that the Alumni Advisory Board serve as the Executive Committee of Convocation on an interim basis, noting that while the UCT Convocation was a statutory body, the UCT Alumni Association was a voluntary association whose purpose included the promotion of support for UCT from amongst its members, and to assist in fundraising activities for UCT. The affairs of the Association were managed by an Alumni Advisory Board consisting of the President of Convocation; members of Council elected by Convocation; and seven additional members elected by the Alumni Association at its AGM. Professor Vaughan noted that the motion, if supported by Convocation, would be submitted to the Alumni Advisory Board AGM for consideration

Dianna Yach noted that the proposal aimed to bring the Alumni Association and the Convocation together to ensure closer collaboration with the President of Convocation and to provide the necessary support to the President of Convocation.

The President of Convocation opened the motion for debate.

Members spoke to the motion.

Observations and questions by members of the Alumni included, *inter alia*, the following:

- Whether there was a timeframe attached to the “interim” period and what the constitution of the structure would look like after the interim period.

- What the purpose of the structure was and what the consequences for governance were, and a request for more detail in respect of budgetary implications of the implementation of such a structure.

The President of Convocation and Emeritus Professor Vaughan replied. They noted that the interim period would be approximately one year during which time additional proposals may be developed. The motion sought support for a transitional arrangement. Emeritus Professor Vaughan explained that the primary motivation for the motion was to develop infrastructure to support the President of Convocation. Dianna Yach added that the motion, if approved, would help with the rationalisation of resources. She noted that this was in line with most other universities. UCT was one of few institutions that did not have an executive body to support Convocation.

The motion was put to the vote and approved with 22 members voting in favour, 19 against and 12 members abstaining.

#### **4.2 Motion calling for UCT to amend its treatment of students who completed their academic programmes but found themselves in arrears and unable to settle those arrears prior to Graduation.**

Matsepe Tsiu, seconded by Amy R Cunliffe, had moved that the University of Cape Town amends its treatment of students who completed their academic programmes but found themselves in arrears and unable to settle those arrears prior to Graduation, preferably within the next twelve months but within the next twenty-four.

Matsepe Tsiu described the current situation as a lose-lose situation in which students who were not able to settle arrears prior to graduation were barred from graduating; did not receive their results and were not provided with their academic transcripts. This resulted in these students remaining in a state of limbo. This prevented these students from entering the labour market as part of the skilled workforce which would allow them to settle arrears faster. The latter had the effect of further delaying receipt of funds owing to the University. He argued that students were being punished for being poor and that it was unbecoming that UCT accepts and educates a student, but then hamstring said student at the very moment when he/she/they student was poised to forge a future using the knowledge, skills and confidence instilled in him/her by his/her teachers at the University.

Matsepe Tsiu proposed as a remedy that that all the outstanding debts of a student who qualified to graduate be structured into a loan, similar in essence to a student loan from a bank, which should then have a monthly interest rate applied to it not less than 1% per month (as dictated in Handbook 12), with a repayment term to be agreed between the student and the University after consultation to that effect. Once the undertaking had been concluded, the University should then sell its rights to that stream of repayments (the bond that effectively would have been structured) to a partnering bank at the par value of that bond (i.e., the amount that the student owed). The student's obligation and repayments would then transfer to the partnering bank, the University would receive the money it was owed faster, and the student

would be at liberty to graduate and proceed to a higher-paying job that would allow for rapid repayment of that student debt, which would be to the partnering bank. He believed students would benefit from this remedy in as far as they would be enabled to secure employment in the skilled jobs market which would allow them to settle their debt faster and to apply the knowledge that they would have acquired over the course of their studies for the betterment of society, social and personal upliftment, satisfaction of personal and professional objectives etc. He noted that the University would benefit in as far as it would be repaid at a faster rate resulting in an improvement in the University's balance sheet.

Members made observations and asked questions as follows:

- The proposal was in the remit of Council and not for the Convocation to decide
- There were no guarantees that loans would be repaid if student debt was converted to a loan
- Proposals would leave students at the mercy of financial institutions and could potentially impose more severe interest rates
- Changing the provisions of the Handbook would create the impression that the responsibility for fees was moved from student, with a greater obligation on the University

The meeting noted that in terms of the fee policy, which was a Council policy, degree certificates and transcripts were not released to students in the case of student debt above a certain debt level. However, it was noted further the University does issue completion letters to potential employers where so requested to confirm that qualification requirements have been met. This mechanism assists students in job applications notwithstanding the fact that the degree certificate might be withheld. The Registrar noted that there had been significant increases in funding allocations because of the NSFAS provisions, together with UCT's own funding, plus additional support from funders and donors. The level of funding assistance to students in 2019 was in the order of R1.4 billion.

The motion was put to the vote and **defeated** with 19 members voting in favour, 25 against and 10 members abstaining.

#### **4.3 Motion calling on UCT to embrace a climate emergency investment plan**

David le Page (who represented Fossil Free South Africa), seconded by James Irlam, moved that UCT should embrace a climate emergency plan. David le Page thanked the Registrar for facilitating access to the meeting and echoed the Vice-Chancellor's gratitude in thanking Professor Tom Moultrie, the Chair of the University Panel for Responsible Investment (UPRI) for his efforts in advancing the work of the Panel. He acknowledged the recent announcements by the University regarding the initial roll-out of

solar energy on campus and thanked the Vice-Chancellor and the University Sustainability Officer for their efforts and leadership in this regard.

He presented the motion as follows:

"For seven years, the Fossil Free UCT campaign has been asking UCT, Africa's leading university, to stop breaking Africa's climate with its investments in fossil fuels. It is unseemly for an African university with a declared social mission to be investing in ways that disregard and destroy the livelihoods of ordinary Africans; and for a centre of excellence in climate research, it is a science communications disaster – rather like being a doctor who smokes in front of their patients."

"South Africa is warming twice as fast as the global average and global actions by governments fall far short of what is needed to stop the 6C–8C of warming we face before 2100. Our current trajectory is a recipe for more droughts, more wildfires, more disease; less water, food, and wildlife; and catastrophically degraded natural infrastructure.

Divestment from fossil fuels is a global movement embracing well over a thousand institutions and over \$14 trillion in capital. Recent divestment commitments include eThekweni/Durban and the University of Cambridge. Divestment from coal, gas and oil is the right thing to do, it's consistent with UCT's stated values and mission, and its duty of care to students, and will most likely improve returns more than continued investments in Sasol.

In response to our campaign, the university has appointed a panel on responsible investment (the UPRI), to which this campaign was able to make recommendations in October – but which will put its own recommendations to Council only in September 2021. Who knows when and if they will be approved? In an accelerating climate emergency, the UPRI will have taken four years to make its first recommendations on responsible investment. When global emissions must be halved by 2030 to meet the Paris climate targets, every month of further delay is a kick in the teeth of future generations.

Two previous motions of Convocation have called for UCT to divest; and this past year, nearly one hundred academic staff, Cape Town school children and a thousand science students have written to and petitioned the new Council in support of divestment. Yet there has to date been no acknowledgement or response to these calls from Council. Our requests to directly present this cause to the joint investment committee and Council have been turned down. When it comes to the greatest human rights crisis facing humanity, this is not a university that listens.

Research from UCT's own Graduate School of Business shows that responsible investment in South Africa rarely goes beyond rhetoric. Professor Mariana Mazzucato, the head of mission-oriented research in the EU, says that real mission-based actions are by definition ambitious, risky, and experimental. UCT now has the opportunity to align its investment practices with its declared intention to be a mission- and values-based institution."

"We call on the Joint Investment Committee and Council to allow us to present our case to them directly, to clearly and publicly acknowledge the university's special responsibilities in a climate emergency, and to take actions consistent with the university's traditions, mission and values.

Divestment cannot happen overnight, but the university should kick off the divestment process by immediately diverting R300 million, less than 5% of the current endowment, to seed-fund a new SA equity fossil-free and socially responsible investment fund or funds this year. Offshore investments can be quickly reinvested in more sustainable funds. UCT should commence the reinvestment process in collaboration with other progressive universities, philanthropies and retirement funds; and publicly declare this climate emergency investment plan."

Le Page noted that while the motion was critical of the University, Fossil Free South Africa was looking forward to working with the University and to move beyond criticism to decisively tackle the crisis.

The seconder of the motion, James Irlam, added that climate change was widely recognised as an emergency that was the greatest threat to public health in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Yet, it was also an opportunity to change the unsustainable "business as usual" approach and to invest in a sustainable future.

The motion was put to the vote and carried with 44 members voting in support of the motion, 8 against and 4 members abstaining.

## **5. Election of a member to be President of Convocation for a two-year term 2020 – 2022**

The Secretary of Convocation was requested to take the Chair for this item. He reminded members of Convocation that a call for nominations for the office of President of Convocation had been issued. Two nominations had been received by the deadline of 18 November 2020. David le Page, seconded by James Irlam had nominated Dr Yvette Abrahams, while Dianna Yach, seconded by Keith Gottschalk, had nominated Professor Eddy Maloka.

The nominators for each of the candidates were given an opportunity to motivate their nominations, and to respond to any questions the members of Convocation may have had, which they did whereafter the meeting proceeded to vote by secret ballot.

Professor Maloka was elected as President of Convocation for a further two-year period with 36 members voting in his favour, 22 in favour of Dr Abrahams and 3 members abstaining.

The Secretary of Convocation congratulated Professor Maloka, thanked Dr Abrahams, and also thanked all members of Convocation for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 19:34

## **Appendix I**

### **Attendance Register and Apologies**

## **Appendix II**

### **University of Cape Town**

### **Vice-Chancellor's Report to The Convocation of the University of Cape Town**

## **Appendix III**

### **Address to UCT Convocation Annual General Meeting 12 December 2019 By Eddy Maloka, President of Convocation**





Appendix I: Attendance Register

**PRESENT**

**Full Name**

Suleiman Da Costa  
Charmaine Van der Merwe  
Megan Abrahams  
Russell Ally  
Bruce Fielies  
Lu Nteya  
Lis Lange  
Libo Msengana-Bam  
Chumisa Qumza  
Cindy De Oliveira  
Sherry Solman  
Royston Pillay  
Reno Morar  
Edwina Brooks  
Glenn Allies  
Paki Zandile)  
Marius Lund  
Eddy Maloka  
Kit Vaughan  
Matsepe Tsiu  
Rebekka Sandmeier  
Thando Tsotsobe  
Landa Mabenge  
Wilfrid (Guest)  
Susan Therese Largier Harrison  
RONICA RAMSOUT  
Clinton Herring  
Nobukhosi Dlamini  
Sue Harrison  
Zolani Makhosonke  
Irmgard Haacke  
Jennifer Ann Thomson (THMJEN002)  
mhleli sibanyoni  
Ndivhuwo Mugivhi  
Obakeng Sebona  
Jan Buys  
Inga Hitzeroth  
Sheila Camerer  
Stephen Langtry  
Kassi Manlan  
Keith Gottschalk  
Rubin Sluszny  
Hugh Corder  
Thebe  
Ebenezer Annan  
Simon Kobuwe  
Mamokgethi Phakeng

Mark Cooper  
Ittamar J Avin  
Mashangu Justice Maluleke  
Keenan Hendrickse  
Wolf-Dieter Schubert  
James Irlam  
Paula Ensor  
Isabelle Ansorge  
Mark New  
Ioana Branga-Peicu  
Bruce Ackerman  
Tiri Chinyoka  
[MGWCHA001@uctcloud.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:MGWCHA001@uctcloud.onmicrosoft.com)  
Verna Oliphant  
Leonard Anstey  
Nicholas Smallberg  
JUDY ANN (STERNBERG) now KAPLAN  
David Le Page  
Laurine Platzky  
Rubin Sluszny  
Dianna.Yach  
Estelle Pfeffer  
jennifer thomson  
Adv. Kelvin Harris  
Hlumanani Ndlovu  
Laurence Gawronsky  
jennifer thomson  
june knight  
Estelle Robins (Pfeffer, Estelle Robins)  
Sidney Shapiro  
Hazel Bowen  
Graham Fieggen  
Sidney Shapiro  
Rowan  
Rowan  
Eddy Maloka  
Johanson Bernard Mhleli Sibanyoni  
Kelvin Harris  
Judy Kaplan  
Hanne Nyokangi  
Dirk Arend Byker  
Mukosi Abraham Mukwevho  
Adv. Nathan Williams  
Hazel Bowen  
Patrick Dowling  
Phumzile Phala  
ARNOLD ROTH  
Mugsy Spiegel  
Obakeng  
Lydia Abel

Kevin Crombie  
Ross C Kelly  
Obakeng Sebona  
Senzo  
Maria Macdiarmid Ingouville Burton  
Vera Emdin  
FELICITY PHUMZILE PHALA  
Ian O. Norton  
Warrick John Sive  
Medee Rall  
Kunorozva, L, Dr  
Alan Anderson  
Yvette Abrahams  
[MGWCHA001@uctcloud.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:MGWCHA001@uctcloud.onmicrosoft.com)

**Apologies**

Samantha Savilzon

Tshid Mokgabudi

Suaib Manjra

Hugh Amore



## **Vice-Chancellor's report to AGM Convocation on 9 December 2020**

### **About 3000 words (to allow VC to select which items to report on)**

Good evening, Goeie naand, Molo, Dumela! Thank you for taking the time to join us virtually. And a special welcome to members from outside Cape Town and even from other countries.

### **The disruptions of this year have reinforced our commitment to excellence, and to bringing positive change to our world.**

We kicked off 2020 by welcoming our new Chancellor, Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe, who is such a strong model for social responsiveness. Her official installation has been postponed because of COVID-19. But that did not keep her from announcing a R5 million donation by the Motsepe Foundation to help UCT manage our multifaceted response to the pandemic.

Unfortunately, as a result of unplanned costs largely related to necessary COVID-19 expenditure, UCT has seen a decline in third-stream income and enrolments, especially for international postgraduate students, and in research funding. In this context I also note that, while public funding for poor and working-class students has increased since 2016, fewer resources are now available to support university operations through block grant allocations.

In 2016, tuition fees were frozen after FeesMustFall protests. Increases were capped at 8% in 2017 and 2018, and at 5.3% in 2019. Last week, Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande proposed a 4.7% university fee increment<sup>1</sup>, which the UCT Council passed last Saturday, along with an accommodation fee increase of 6.7%.

Budget allocations for higher education for 2020/21, as with many other allocations, have been cut: infrastructure allocation for universities was reduced by R500 million while the block grant was reduced by R382.59 million. The budget for the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) was decreased by a drastic 16%, which will affect universities directly, including allocations to research chairs and centres of excellence. The reduced funding will also affect allocations to research chairs and centres of excellence. We are planning accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ewn.co.za/2020/11/27/nzimande-proposes-4-7-increase-on-university-tuition-fees-for-2021>

### **When the country entered lockdown in March, UCT moved into emergency remote teaching (ERT).**

In April, the Senate Executive Committee approved our ERT framework, which was based on data gathered in a student survey about their data connectivity and readiness to learn remotely. We knew students had different levels of access to the Internet and technology, and that some were in environments that were not conducive to studying.

- So all online teaching had low-tech options, such as printed learning materials and USB drives for students who could not access the internet.
- We provided loan laptops to every South African student who requested one.
- We set up a working group to support the needs of vulnerable students (including those with disabilities).
- We negotiated with service providers for zero-rated access and data bundles for students in South Africa who needed them; increased the number of tutors in our faculties; and provided a call centre for student questions about online teaching, with additional hotlines for student counselling.
- We made plans for students who needed additional assistance, to catch up on their studies when campus reopened.
- Our approach included postgraduate teaching and online or telephonic support for student wellness and mental health. The libraries continued a distance service for staff and students.

The Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) hosted some 99 webinars to support academics who had to suddenly shift to online teaching – this is extraordinary.

After Dr Nzimande announced that universities could welcome back all students, we stuck to our carefully formulated plan for the phased return of staff and students to campus and residences. This cautious approach has proven wise in light of the recent increases in COVID-19 cases in the Western and Eastern Cape.

Our top priority remains the health and safety of every person who enters campus property. For this reason, only those who have received letters of authorisation may return. Staff returning to campus include those performing essential services, those needed to support the students in residence and on campus, and those who are engaged with research and academic work which cannot be done remotely. To date we have just under 4700 students in UCT and UCT-leased residences. They continue to work mostly online.

We have extended our academic year to February. Our 2021 academic year will begin on 15 March and most undergraduate teaching and learning will be online, for at least the first semester. The feedback we received from students and staff members in July about their experiences of ERT is helping us to finetune our programme for 2021.

**The rate of infection on campus has remained relatively low.**

As at 1 December 2020, we have had 122 reported cases among staff members outside of the Health Sciences Faculty, with 102 reported recoveries. The number of students who tested positive for the virus is 62, including 16 Faculty of Health Sciences students on clinical platforms. However, in the week leading up to 1 December, we noted an alarming rise in cases among staff members: nine new staff cases were recorded: the highest weekly tally since 4 August 2020. The university continues to urge members of the UCT community to follow all COVID-19 protocols. We pay tribute to the nine staff members and one student who have passed on due to the virus.

**We leapt into the virtual space to seek out new opportunities.**

We found we could reach a wider audience by shifting public UCT events online, including the Research Symposium, our Women's Day event, the Job Expo, student entrepreneur presentations and UCT Open Day.

Our three VC Open Lectures reached global audiences:

- Colin Coleman, a senior fellow and lecturer at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, spoke on "From a 'two-speed society' to one that works for all – Doing whatever it takes". Audience members included former finance minister Nhlanhla Nene, Minister of Public Enterprises Pravin Gordhan, and former statistician-general Pali Lehohla.
- Professor Stephen Toope, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, participated with me in a discussion titled "Global leaders, global partners".
- Her Excellency Ms Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) and Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, spoke on "Decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): So what?"

Professor Hussein Suleman, Head of the Department of Computer Science, presented [a VC's inaugural lecture](#) on the realignment of computer science to societal needs.

Professor Ravi Kanbur, of Cornell University in the USA, presented our [54<sup>th</sup> TB Davie Memorial Lecture](#) on “Implications of rising economic inequality for academic freedom”.

We explored the virtual space further by hosting “[Unleashing the new Global University](#)”, a five-part series on different aspects of global collaboration for a sustainable and equitable planet.

We also conducted a fully online election process in October for Faculty Councils and the Student Representative Council.

**Heritage Month in September offered an opportunity to reflect on UCT's history and collective heritage, including recent events such as:**

- renaming UCT buildings;
- how we shape and curate our collection of 1 700 artworks across campus;
- our commitment to the Sutherland human remains restitution project, which will resume when circumstances permit;
- the launch of our new Khoi and San Centre and the development of a Khoekhoegowab undergraduate language programme; and
- the webinar we hosted to discuss decolonial thought and discourse.

**During lockdown, supporting UCT staff has been as much of a priority as supporting students.**

Thankfully, online learning has been in practice at UCT for years, and our wealth of web-based resources, including webinars, have assisted staff in other universities as well as UCT, in how to work on digital platforms, developing student activities, interacting with classes, assessing progress in a remote context, and other aspects of remote teaching.

Researchers and their support staff are working remotely as far as possible.

We have made online and telephone counselling services available to all staff members and their families, and have ensured that staff have access to medical assistance through their medical aids.

**This crisis reinforces UCT's focus on social responsiveness in our research and teaching.**



Just a few innovations to arise during the pandemic include electrical engineering student Rowyn Naidoo's plans for an [affordable UVC light system to disinfect large rooms](#); the Knowledge Translation Unit's [distribution of multilingual COVID-19 information](#) for homes in low-income settings around the world; Professor Mohamed Jeebhay's [screening tool for workplaces](#), and postgraduate researcher [Matthew Trusler's innovative Vizar face shield](#).

UCT researchers are investigating diagnostics and potential immunity tests, and vaccine candidates; and studying the susceptibility to COVID-19 of South Africans living with HIV and TB. UCT has joint staff with the Provincial Department of Health and the National Health Laboratory Services, working in local hospitals and clinics.

**Last Wednesday, just over 300 UCT colleagues walked the virtual red carpet as we celebrated online the outstanding achievements of our extraordinary staff members, including 226 recipients of Long Service and almost 100 ad hom promotions – 22 of them to the position of professor, thus increasing the diversity of the professoriate**

- **Professor Elmi Muller** received the [2019 UCT Alan Pifer Award](#) for her work in ensuring that HIV-positive patients with renal failure can safely receive lifesaving organ transplants.
- The [2019 Distinguished Teacher Award](#) went to **Professor Andrew Argent** of the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, **Dr Tessa Dowling** of the School of Languages and Literatures, **A/Professor Amrita Pande** in the Department of Sociology and **A/Professor Romy Parker** in the Department of Health & Rehabilitative Sciences.
- The **Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching** received the VC's Award for Service Excellence and **Mr Ahmien van der Walt** of the Department of Alumni and Development received the VC's Award for Global Citizenship.

Last month we welcomed six new members to the UCT College of Fellows:

- In Commerce: **Professor Haroon Borat** in the Development Policy Research Unit;
- In Health Sciences: **Professor Linda-Gail Bekker** of the Desmond Tutu HIV Centre; **Professor Jonathan Blackburn**, SARChI Chair in the Division of Chemical & Systems Biology, Institute for Infectious Diseases & Molecular Medicine; **Professor Johannes Fagan** of the Division of

Otorhinolaryngology; and **Professor Landon Myer** of the Department of Public Health & Family Medicine;

- In Humanities: **Professor Mark Fleishman** of Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies.

Other notable awards received by UCT staff this year include:

- **Dr Jiska de Groot** in the African Climate and Development Initiative, who, with Dr Federico Caprotti of the University of Exeter, won the prestigious [Newton Prize](#) for their research into renewable energy in urban settings in South Africa.
- **Professor Dee Smythe of the Centre for Law and Society and A/Professor Kelley Moulton of the Centre of Criminology** received the Stan Wheeler Mentorship Award – **the first time the award has gone to scholars in the global south, and the first time it was awarded for joint work.**
- **Dr Lauren Arendse** of the Drug Discovery and Development Centre; **Dr Rondrotiana Barimalala and Dr Ross Blamey**, of the Department of Oceanography; and **Dr Felix Sizwe Dube** of the Department of Molecular & Cell Biology [were selected as Future Leaders – African Independent Research fellows](#). And
- Seven academics received the UCT [College of Fellows Young Researcher Award](#).

**Graduation is, of course, what we all work towards.**

We share our students' sadness at not being able to walk the stage to receive their degrees, but we have designed celebratory online events to preserve the health and safety of our graduands and their families.

On 14 December we will celebrate the March 2020 cohort of 5261 graduates who completed their degree programmes in 2019, as well as 48 PhD graduates and our 2019 Social Responsiveness award recipient, Dr Rebecca Hodes in UCT's AIDS and Society Research Unit, **who is recognised for her unique study on youth and HIV.**

On 15 December we will celebrate the December 2020 cohort of more than 1500 graduands, our 200-plus PhD graduates and UCT alum Professor James Midgley, of UC/Berkeley, who will receive an honorary Doctorate in Literature from UCT for his pioneering work in international social work.

Both ceremonies will be broadcast online.

We had planned on awarding the UCT President of Convocation Medal for 2019 to alumnus Mr Thembekile Kimi Makwetu, the Auditor General of South Africa, who sadly passed away on 11 November. We will confer this award posthumously at a future date.

**The hard work of my colleagues results in remarkable students, graduands and research. For example:**

- **For the second year in a row, women have taken most of the top spots in the final-year class for civil engineering – traditionally a male-dominated field. Four of the five top honours students in the civil engineering Class of 2019 are women.**
- **Two PhD students are undertaking ground-breaking work in the palaeosciences, as the inaugural 2020 Advancing Womxn fellows in the Human Evolution Research Institute. They also are bringing diversity into a male-dominated profession.**
- **More than 30 members of the UCT community are on the Mail & Guardian [2020 list of 200 Young South Africans](#).**
- **Professor Heather Zar, the chair of Paediatrics and Child Health, is leading a [research project](#) to understand severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 infection and coronavirus disease in children in Africa. She is one of 12 globally to receive a COVID-19 grant.**
- **The Biopharming Research Unit, led by Professor Ed Rybicki, was one of only three to [receive government funding](#) to assist in the production of diagnostic reagents for COVID-19, while spinoff company Cape Bio Pharms is working on a fast and affordable antibody test for COVID-19.**
- **Dr Jane Battersby's [gender equality research](#) shows that women in South Africa still bear most of the responsibility for food procurement and preparation in their households.**
- **Professor Ulrike Rivett, Director of the School of Information Technology, is part of a multinational team embarking on new research into the gendered nature of access to digital technologies.**
- **A/Professor Amrita Pande, a sociologist and feminist ethnographer, is researching the global market for egg providers, surrogates, brokers, doctors and prospective parents.**

**We have made five senior leadership appointments at UCT this year, of whom four are black and three are female.**

**Ms Brenda Martin** became [Director of the UCT Careers Service](#) at the start of the year; Associate Professor Lionel Green-Thompson became [Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences](#) on 15 March; Dr Catherine Duggan, the new [Director of the UCT Graduate School of Business](#) (GSB), took office on 1 September; and **Dr Linda Mtwisha**, the new [Executive Director: Research](#), joined on 1 October. **Mr Pura Mgolombane** will head the Department of Student Affairs in 2021, replacing Dr Moonira Khan, who is retiring after 15 years of faithful service to UCT.

The Dean of Commerce for the last two years, **Professor Linda Ronnie**, has asked to return to an academic role by the end of next March after being promoted to Professor. Her service to the faculty has been extraordinary and we are grateful that we are not losing her to UCT.

Our retiring academics include:

- **Professor Hugh Corder**, whose ties with [UCT span 48 years](#). He became Chair in Public Law in 1987 and has acted in various executive capacities to steady the ship during times of transition.
- **Professor Alan Hirsch**, who, during his 28 years at UCT, co-founded our Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice, which later became the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance. He was recently appointed to [President Cyril Ramaphosa's Presidential Economic Advisory Council](#).
- Veteran law academic and human rights defender **Professor Rashida Manjoo**, after a 20-year association with the university.
- **Professor Daya Reddy**, after more than four decades of illustrious service to UCT, most recently as director of UCT's Centre for Research in Computational and Applied Mechanics.

We welcomed the new members of [UCT Council](#), who started their term on 1 July 2020, led by **Ms Babalwa Ngonyama**, our first female chair of Council, and deputy chair **Ms Nazeema Mohamed** – the first time these two key roles are simultaneously occupied by women.

On Saturday, Council approved:

- a proposal to establish the annual Bongani Mayosi Lecture, to celebrate African scholarship in the spirit of our late colleague;

- a policy on sexual misconduct, to underscore UCT’s commitment to an institutional environment that is free from any form of harassment;
- a policy to guide responsible investment involving environmental, social and governance issues;
- a budget allocation of R62.3m to upgrade UCT ventilation systems for use under COVID-19 conditions; and
- the appointment of an acting Ombud, as the term of the current UCT Ombud will end on 31 December.

**COVID-19 hit UCT while we were already engaging with Vision 2030 and our initial ideas about doing things differently in the academic world.**

As we consider how we see this university in 2030, we ask: “The world is changing; are we?” Since I took office in 2018, as a university community we have been discussing how to lead change, since change is inevitable. During lockdown, the executive presented UCT’s Vision 2030 and interacted online with over 3 500 staff members. These discussions will continue. Vision 2030 is built on three inseparable values: excellence, transformation, and sustainability. Its four goals are:

- holistic, innovative, future-oriented education;
- research that solves Africa’s problems and contributes to global knowledge;
- thought leadership; and
- an organisational ethos that supports new ways of thinking, being and doing.

Last Saturday, Council gave unanimous support for this vision to unleash human potential to create a fair and just society.

**We are proud to continue as Africa’s leading university in four of the five world university rankings, including:**

- the [2021 Times Higher Education World University Rankings](#), published in September, where UCT was the only African university in the top 200 universities globally;

- the [US News Best Global Universities Rankings](#), where UCT is top in Africa and is up 18 places globally to 103rd position;
- the [ShanghaiRanking's Academic Ranking of World Universities](#); and
- the [2020 Quacquarelli Symonds ranking](#), which placed the GSB Executive MBA programme in the global top 50. (It is also the only business school in Africa to feature in the rigorous *Financial Times* rankings for its ground-breaking Executive MBA programme.)

While UCT's story is much bigger than any ranking system can cover, the rankings acknowledge the continuing excellence of our scholarship, leadership and talent.

**END**

Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng  
Vice-Chancellor  
9 December 2020

## Report of the President of UCT Convocation to the 2020 AGM

Let me begin by acknowledging each one of us who are present at this 2020 AGM.

Members of the Executive Management

Academic staff

Students

Members of our alumni community.

Thank you for being here today, even though we can only see glimpses of each other on this virtual platform. We are making history today by being, perhaps, the first Convocation AGM to ever meet outside the physical confines of Cape Town, through virtual connectivity. I see this development as a best practice that we should consider adopting for future AGMs, maybe in a hybrid format that will allow those who are able to gather in person in Cape Town to do so, while accommodating virtual participation at the AGM for most of us who scattered all over the world.

2020 will go into the annals of history as the year of the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

### **The Bad is COVID-19.**

When the year 2020 dawned on us it found us with much optimism for our individual selves, our families, for our institution the UCT, as well as flaring hope for our country, the continent and humanity as a whole. Little did we know that this will be a runaway year, nonetheless a year that set out to remind us of our fragility. This has been a year that impacted on our activities as an institution of higher learning in a manner never imagined before, yet we swam with the tide, and instead of disappearing as a civilisation, we had no option but to adapt.

Many of the University and Convocation activities scheduled for the 2020 year had to be canned. The installation of our new Chancellor is another event we continue to look forward to because of the role the Convocation played in her election.

As the Convocation we had to find innovative ways to claim our place in the sun or risk being left behind. I would like to believe that our identity as an African University in South Africa contributed to our resilience to the elements. When most public and private institutions, businesses, governments were under strict lockdown, we came alive and kept our interactive work going albeit virtually.

It is my view that our activities during Africa Month helped set us back in motion and revived our spirit of endurance. The week within which we held our Africa Month celebrations was a very lively one. The series of virtual symposiums on “Africa’s innovations in the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic” discussed pertinent governance and developmental issues in Africa, towards the formulation of policy recommendations. Indeed, it was very enlightening to listen to the various responses from across the university community about what it is that makes us African, and how this informs what we do.

As a leading institution in the field of research we were able to interact with researchers, academics and students from around the globe. We discussed, debated, analysed COVID-19 in what we thought is its multi-faceted appearance from what we thought it is and what it is meant. We looked at possible future scenarios of what could become of it. In all this we remained optimistic that UCT as an African University can contribute a lot towards strengthening opportunities for our community of students, lecturers, its leadership and all its stakeholders.

We must also note that much like other universities worldwide we were faced with the challenge of pulling together to ensure that the academic project stayed on course. This necessitated the shift to remote teaching, learning and research and across the greater multi-



disciplinary engagement. We note with a sense of pride the concerted focus on student success through academic mentorship and virtual tutorials that were introduced. We note with much appreciation the ways in which administrative and professional staff continued to support UCT through these challenging times by working remotely. Shifting from conventional methods of teaching and instruction to attending additional online meetings to ensure appropriate action is taken. Their efforts should never be taken for granted and their diligence is highly appreciated. Our frontline defence on many fronts are our academics and staff who provide ongoing assistance as front line workers during this pandemic

Our national conversation on COVID-19 should shift to setting a clear and achievable timeline for a massive rollout of the vaccine. UCT as an R&D centre should be part of the national effort to produce an effective vaccine locally.

Friends

The #BlackLivesMatter global campaign has exposed to us the **Ugly** - that side of our world we should not ignore, whisper about, deny, or wish away. Therefore, as UCT we are not alone in the battle against the monster of racism, to create a society/community that is inclusive and comfortable in its diversity. The road we have chosen to transform our University is indeed part of a global effort towards a better world for all. It will not be easy, but this is a battle that must be fought.

Our role as Convocation, I believe, should be that of a facilitator, hence we must take care not to become part of the problem. We should be a bridge builder to help the University navigate the storm that comes with transforming such a big institution.

We (the Convocation) are a diverse community, and it is this diversity that our University needs to build on for its better future.

The Convocation should be a tool for change, improvement and inclusivity, and a place where we celebrate the festival of ideas in your diversity.

We become more effective when we work better, collaboratively, and constructively, with all constituencies that have been put together by history on UCT campus.

As the saying goes: “Never mind if your nose is ugly, as long as you can breathe through it. “

### **What about the Good?**

Today we meet for this AGM under totally different circumstances as that of some 10 months ago. The virtual universe has provided us with an unprecedented opportunity to be more inclusive in our meetings. We have the opportunity to chart our own ‘new normal’. The virtual reality of executing our programmes presents us with the opportunity to include more members of our alumni community wherever they happen to be. We now know that physical boundaries can be transcended. We can go beyond Cape Town and thus have a more vibrant, more interactive, and lively Convocation that can contribute in a large scale to the well-being of our beloved alma mater.

## **Moving Forward**

We had planned to launch a Dialogue Series in 2020 to support UCT transformation efforts, but the impact of COVID-19 rendered this impossible. We had canvassed this ideas with different stakeholders, including student leadership, - and all were keen to participate in the Dialogue Series. It is my hope that this ideas will remain on the to-do list for the future leadership of the Convocation.

We have also been in conversation with key University stakeholders, especially the alumni association (UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF DIANNA YACH), to find ways to strengthen the Convocation and the office of the President of the Convocation (as a statutory body). To this end, we have initiated a process of reforms, part of which are the form a Motion that is before this AGM for your kind consideration.

As part of the proposed reforms, the Alumni Advisory Board is preparing to transition to become the interim executive committee for the President of Convocation (a motion to ratify this is being put to Alumni at the Alumni Association AGM in February 2021).

We further propose for Convocation to have a dedicated admin office with requisite staff support. We believe this would improve the work of the Convocation Office and impact thereof.

## **To conclude**

In 2019 we held our Convocation AGM amidst mourning the loss of one of our students who was a victim of gender-based violence. It was indeed a tragic loss of a life that had potential to be the best. At the same convocation ceremony, we nominated one of our own as recipient

of the Convocation President's medal, our dearly departed Attorney-General Kimi Makwetu. Sadly, COVID-19 robbed us of the opportunity to witness him walk the stage to receive the medal in person. It is my understanding that this medal shall nonetheless be bestowed upon him posthumously.

Friends

Many of us are following the difficult and yet impressive work of Hermione Theresa Cronje, the head of the Investigating Directorate in the Office of the National Director of Public Prosecutions. We know her record when she was at the National Prosecuting Authority's Asset Forfeiture Unit, including the role she played in the creation of the Anti-Corruption Task Team.

The small steps of her career as one of our best prosecutors began on this campus, as a BA and LLB Graduate from the University of Cape Town. She needs our support and recognition by this Convocation. In this regard, I wish to put before you that our 2020 Medal of the President of the Convocation should be awarded to her.

Since this is my last meeting as the President of the Convocation, I wish to thank all our members for entrusting me with this important responsibility. I did my best and stand ready to continue to make further contribution to the University in whatever capacity, to be part of our collective effort to create a better future for our University.

I say, thank you to UCT staff and All colleagues who were always just a call or email away to offer me support.

I thank you!

**Professor Eddy Maloka**  
**President of Convocation**  
**9 December 2020**

