

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



THE CONVOCATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Convocation held on Thursday, 7 December 2023 from 17h00 until 20h00 using the Microsoft Teams virtual platform

Present:

The President of Convocation (C Manlan) and the Vice-Chancellor *interim* (Emeritus Professor BD Reddy), the Secretary of Convocation (RN Pillay), and those members who had registered and whose names are recorded in the attached Appendix I.

1. Welcome, register and apologies

The President of Convocation, Carl Manlan, welcomed those members present and thanked them for making themselves available to attend the AGM (*the names of those members present are attached to these minutes in appendix 1*). The President invited the Secretary of Convocation, Royston Pillay, to explain the housekeeping rules for the meeting and the functionality of Microsoft Teams that was being used to facilitate the meeting, which he did.

In response to questions posed by two members, Convocation noted that access control had been put in place to ensure that all of those attempting to join the meeting were in fact members of the Convocation. The President acknowledged that some members may find this to be burdensome but emphasised that it was a necessary security measure. He also informed Convocation that the University's technical team was on standby to assist any members who were experiencing difficulty with joining the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday, 8 December 2022

Hugh Amoore, seconded by Dianna Yach, moved that Convocation confirm the minutes of the AGM held on Thursday, 8 December 2022.

Sabakhe Mahlangu informed Convocation that he had, in January 2023, submitted a request for the audio recording of the December 2022 Convocation AGM to be released to members so that they would be able to determine for themselves whether the minutes were an accurate representation of what had taken place at that meeting. The Secretary, as requested by the Chair, advised Convocation that it was standard practice across the University that meeting recordings were not released to committee members after a meeting, the purpose of these recordings being

solely to assist the servicing officer in the production of the minutes of that meeting.

After a short discussion there was general agreement within Convocation that the release of audio recordings from AGMs was not desirable as a general practice, but agreed that the Secretary should expedite the production and distribution of draft minutes so that members who were present at an AGM could provide timeous feedback on the record.

The Chair then put the motion that Convocation confirm the minutes of the AGM held on Thursday, 8 December 2022, which Convocation so resolved by an overwhelming majority.

3. Matters arising from the minutes: Convocation's 2022 resolution that a special meeting of the Convocation be called to discuss the findings of the Council's independent investigating panel

In respect of the Convocation's resolution that a special meeting of the Convocation be called to discuss the findings of the Council's independent investigating panel, Hugh Amoore moved that Convocation, having noted

- its resolution taken at the December 2022 AGM;
- that the finalisation and distribution of the panel's report was anticipated to have occurred much sooner than had been the case when Convocation had taken its December 2022 resolution;
- that the panel's report had only recently been adopted by Council and released to the University community; and
- that the Chair of Council had communicated the outcome of Council's decision at the time the report was published,

should

- (a) accept that it had not been possible for the special meeting of Convocation to be held earlier; and
- (b) express its thanks to the Chair of Council for communicating its decision to Convocation.

A number of members objected to this motion, arguing that it should not be allowed as the deadline for the submission of motions to the meeting had passed and that to entertain it at this stage would be to give it primacy over the motions that were scheduled to be dealt with later in the agenda. This applied particularly to the motion moved by Evariste Umba and seconded by Sabakhe Mahlangu, which had been distributed to Convocation as part of the motions pack:

I move that the proposed 2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM) be postponed pending the holding of the Special General Meeting (SGM) as per the resolution of the 2022 AGM.

As this pertained to a decision taken by Convocation at its December 2022 AGM, Sabakhe Mahlangu argued that the matter should be dealt with now and that the Chair should inform Convocation of the reasons for this special meeting not yet having been called. The Chair responded and explained that the special meeting had not yet been held because the panel's report had only recently become available. The Chair sought the Secretary's input on how Convocation should proceed, with the Secretary advising that the motion by Hugh Amoore and the motion moved by Evariste Umba and Sabakhe Mahlangu be dealt with together, with the former being a valid motion because it related to a matter arising from the minutes.

Convocation proceeded to debate this matter. Those who argued in favour of the current meeting being placed on hold until such time as the special meeting could take place did expressed the

view that the special meeting should have been called as soon as the panel's report had been made public, and that upon the release of the report the Chair of Council should have taken the initiative to address the Convocation on the panel's findings.

Those members of Convocation who argued against the motion to delay this AGM did so in agreement with the Chair's input. There was also general agreement amongst these members that the motion moved by Hugh Amoore sufficiently covered the reasons for why the special meeting had not been held. While some agreed that the matter could perhaps have been better dealt with, their ultimate position was that the issue at hand was on how Convocation should proceed from this point.

As the discussion continued to evolve the motion moved by Hugh Amoore was neither formally seconded nor put to a vote, and as a result it fell away.

In order to bring the discussion to a close and for Convocation to decide on a way forward the Chair put the motion by Evariste Umba and Sabakhe Mahlangu to a vote, the outcome of which was as follows:

Support:	27
Do not support:	76
Abstain:	23

The motion therefore did not carry, with the result being that this AGM of Convocation would continue with its business. The Chair, however, acknowledged the concerns that had been raised during the course of the debate and that the special meeting would be called as soon as was practicably possible, taking into account the availability of the Chair of Council.

4. Report of the Vice-Chancellor on the state of UCT

Note: The report from the Vice-Chancellor interim was taken after item 8.

The Vice-Chancellor *interim* presented his report on the state of UCT (*this report is attached as appendix 2 to these minutes*), whereafter the Chair invited input and questions from members.

Appreciation was expressed for the frank and honest report delivered by the Vice-Chancellor *interim*, as it gave Convocation a clear understanding of the state in which the University found itself, as well as a sense that those currently in Executive positions were working to right the ship. With particular reference to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), a member also told Convocation that, in their view, it was heartening to see that issues with the direct payment method instituted by NSFAS did not appear to have added to UCT's public relations problems in the media.

The Vice-Chancellor *interim* responded to the point raised regarding the NSFAS direct payment process, which he told Convocation had been the source of significant student opposition. This issue, however, was a national one, and it was not clear how it may be addressed going forward. Particularly problematic was the R45 000 per year cap that NSFAS had placed on accommodation, and UCT would soon reach a stage where it would not be able to underwrite the differential costs associated with student accommodation as it had done in 2023. The University was currently awaiting the outcome of a meeting between NSFAS and Universities South Africa (USAf) that had been held on 27 November 2023, wherein a proposal had been made that NSFAS should distinguish between urban and peri-urban universities insofar as funding for student accommodation was concerned.

There being no further questions Convocation noted the Vice-Chancellor *interim*'s report and thanked him for it.

5. Report of the President of Convocation

The President of Convocation spoke from the Chair and offered a reflection on his term of office. He told Convocation that since taking office the University had found itself in a number of transitional phases, and this had framed the work and engagements he had undertaken. He urged that all members of the University consider how they can participate in supporting members of the community to ensure that students, both now and into the future, could continue to receive the quality education that UCT was known for so that they too, in turn, could go on to support future generations that put back into society. He cited UCT Day as a particular example of when this ethos of togetherness for the betterment of the University and society had been on display.

In closing, the President told Convocation that it had been his honour to serve as President of Convocation and thanked all members for the trust they had placed in him over the past two years. He also commended members of Convocation for their extraordinary contributions to the University during this time and for helping to shape UCT into one that its entire community could be proud of. The President then invited questions and comments from members.

Several members extended their thanks to the President for his work during his term of office and for making members of the alumni feel closer to the University. These members also made the point that there existed within Convocation a wide range of skills and expertise, and told the President, both current and incoming, and the Vice-Chancellor *interim* that should this be needed to continue UCT's stabilisation and journey into the future they should always feel comfortable to call upon it.

6. Motions

Note: The motions were taken after item 3.

As some members were experiencing technical issues with the voting functionality on Microsoft Teams the Chair told Convocation that anyone unable to vote using this functionality should e-mail their vote to the Secretary at registrar@uct.ac.za.

6.1 Motion by Evariste Umba and Sabakhe Mahlangu

This motion was dealt with under item 3 (above).

6.2 Motion by Martin Plaut and Nicoli Natrass

Convocation had before it for its consideration the following motion moved by Martin Plaut and seconded by Nicoli Natrass:

Convocation acknowledges and applauds the work of the library staff in their herculean task of recovering from the fire that destroyed so much, with an appalling effect on Special Collections. Some unique material has been permanently lost, although much was saved and is being restored. We note with great sadness that this blow to the library might have been avoided if basic maintenance had been carried, including clearing the gutters from which the fire spread. We urge the University administration to ensure that the fabric of UCT is properly maintained and that this risk does not recur. Convocation calls on the Vice-Chancellor to conduct a full and transparent inquiry into the destruction of the library in order to learn lessons and prevent any further disasters, and

urges the university to commit the resources (in terms of funding and staffing) to rebuild and re-open the Special Collections as rapidly as possible.

The mover and seconder spoke to their motion, telling Convocation that they were deeply troubled by the destruction of the University's collection caused by the April 2021 fire. What was at issue, in their view, was that while an investigation had taken place into the cause of the fire the outcome of this had not been made widely available, and to their knowledge no transparent enquiry had been made into the amount of time it had taken for the fire trucks to arrive on campus to battle the blaze, nor had a complete list of what had been lost been made available to the University community. They argued that the Vice-Chancellor *interim* needed to be frank and honest with Convocation and the wider University community regarding the cause of the fire, and to commit the resources necessary to rebuilding the collection.

The Chair sought the Secretary's guidance as to whether the motion fell within Convocation's competence, with the Secretary indicating that it was given that the Statute (S37) empowered Convocation to "...discuss and state its opinion upon any matter relating to the University..." If the motion was carried and became a resolution of the Convocation the matter would then be referred to Council for it to consider. The Secretary added that the issue of the fire had been extensively discussed at meetings of the Senate and the Faculty Boards, and that while an investigation had been conducted by the University's insurers the findings could not yet be made public as their work was still ongoing.

Speaking as someone who was present when the fire spread to Smuts Hall, Siya Ntuntwana suggested that the results of any enquiry must clearly set out what measures had been put in place to lessen the risk of further fire damage to the buildings on campus, particularly given that a number of these had flammable materials that were in close proximity to trees.

Alapan Arnab, seconded by Daniel Tate, moved an amendment to the motion to require that the results of the enquiry should be reported to the next AGM of Convocation either in writing or by other suitable means. This amendment was accepted by the mover and seconder of the primary motion and became part of the substantive motion before Convocation.

The Chair then put the amended motion to a vote, the outcome of which was as follows:

Support:	74
Do not support:	16
Abstain:	15

The motion was therefore carried and became a resolution of the Convocation.

6.3 Motion by Seán Muller and Thembelani Mazibuko

Convocation had before it for its consideration the following motion moved by Seán Muller and seconded by Thembelani Mazibuko:

University management should report back to Convocation on its recent meeting with the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Parliament of South Africa.

Convocation noted that neither the mover nor the seconder of the motion were present to speak to their motion. The Chair ruled that the matter should be taken as the motion had been received before the deadline and he invited input and comment from members.

Izu Sichinga noted that this motion included a similar requirement placed on the University's management as the motion passed by Convocation at its December 2022 AGM, and suggested that if this motion passed it should be made clear to management that it was obliged to follow through and report back to Convocation. The Chair responded that as the mover and seconder were not present he could not take proposed amendments to the motion, but that a note to this effect could be sent to management in the event that the motion was passed.

Sabakhe Mahlangu asked that if this motion were to be passed that it be joined with the December 2022 resolution and responded to at the special meeting of Convocation. The Chair reiterated that this could not be taken now as it amounted to an amendment to the motion, which neither the mover nor seconder could respond to.

The Chair then put the motion to a vote, the outcome of which was as follows:

Support:	67
Do not support:	20
Abstain:	20

The motion was therefore carried and became a resolution of the Convocation.

7. Election of a member to be President of Convocation for a two-year term: 2023 - 2025

The Chair informed Convocation that he had taken the decision not to run for a second term of office, and invited the nominees for the position (Andrew Matseke, Sabakhe Mahlangu and Naadiya Moosajee) to give a brief presentation on their candidacy, which they did. During these presentations Andrew Matseke indicated that he wished to withdraw his candidacy, which Convocation noted.

The Chair then put the remaining two candidates to a vote, the outcome of which was as follows:

Sabakhe Mahlangu:	19
Naadiya Moosajee:	85

Naadiya Moosajee was therefore duly elected as President of Convocation for the period 2023 to 2025. She expressed her thanks to Convocation for placing its trust in her and undertook to bring a future-oriented approach to the role during her term of office.

The Vice-Chancellor *interim* and the Secretary extended the University's thanks to the President for his work and contributions to the University, and for the positive way in which he had represented the University in a number of external fora both locally and internationally. The President thanked the Vice-Chancellor *interim* and the Secretary and gave his assurance that he would remain an active member of the alumni and champion the University whenever given an opportunity to do so.

8. Election of 5 persons who are UCT alumni to be members of the Convocation Executive Committee for a two-year term: 2023 - 2025

The Chair put the names of those nominated to be members of the Convocation Executive Committee for the period 2023 to 2025 to a vote, the outcome of which was as follows:

Rowyn Naidoo:	70
Nande Dyantyi:	69
Nombulelo Magula:	65
Rod Solomons:	54
Rendani Nefale:	44
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Ntshengedzeni Anthony Michael Tshivhase:	40
Shumani Netangaheni:	39
Sabakhe Mahlangu:	32

The five nominees who received the most votes were therefore duly elected to be members of the Convocation Executive Committee for the period 2023 to 2025. The President and Vice-Chancellor *interim* extended their congratulations to the newly elected members, as well as their thanks to the outgoing members of the Committee and to Dianna Yach for her contributions as President of the Alumni Advisory Board.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 20h00.

Appendix 1: *List of the members of Convocation present at the December 2023 AGM*

Appendix 2: *Report of the Vice-Chancellor on the state of UCT*

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



THE CONVOCATION

**List of those members of Convocation present at the Annual General Meeting held on
Thursday, 7 December 2023**

	Name	Surname
1.	Athenkosi	Adam
2.	Abu	Adams
3.	Petra	Adams
4.	Lateef	Akinyemi
5.	Hugh	Amoore
6.	Seyi	Amosun
7.	Gillian	Anstey
8.	Alapan	Arnab
9.	Kerrin	Begg
10.	Naadiya	Bogan
11.	Mignonne	Breier
12.	Kurt	Brevis
13.	Marianne	Camerer
14.	Shumani	Cele
15.	Patrick	Commerford
16.	Ashraf	Conrad
17.	Hugh	Corder
18.	Judith	Cornell
19.	Shelly	Deane
20.	Nobukhosi	Dlamini
21.	Judith	Du Toit
22.	Nande	Dyantyi
23.	Angela	Edwards
24.	Paula	Ensor
25.	Hasmukhlal	Gajjar
26.	CT	Gaunt
27.	Andreas	Gerdes
28.	Wieland	Gevers
29.	Anele	Gobodwana
30.	Ayanda	Godo
31.	Pumeza	Gogwana

32.	Keith	Gottschalk
33.	Lionel	Green-Thompson
34.	Tracy	Gutuza
35.	Kirsten	Harrison
36.	Sandele	Hlangadala
37.	Sizwe	Hlatshwayo
38.	Heather	Hodgson
39.	Melodie	Hougaard
40.	Jan	Hough
41.	Annette	Hubschle
42.	George	Hull
43.	Greg	Jackson
44.	Nisha	Jacob
45.	Quinton	Johnson
46.	Portia	Johnston
47.	Loren	Joseph
48.	Michelle	Kahn
49.	Mnwana	Kambule
50.	Moonira	Khan
51.	Mlungisi	Khanyile
52.	Mangaliso	Khomo
53.	Arnold	Kinabo
54.	Clive	Kirkwood
55.	Patricia	Kooyman
56.	Muizz	Lambarey
57.	Murray	Leibbrandt
58.	Iain	Low
59.	Pat	Lucas
60.	Landa	Mabenge
61.	Alison	Mackenzie
62.	Phiwaba	Madokwe
63.	Sithabile	Magoxo
64.	Lineo	Mahalika
65.	Sabakhe	Mahlangu
66.	Shai	Makgoba
67.	Thabo	Makgolo
68.	Zolani	Makhosonke
69.	Shuaib	Manjra
70.	Malibongwe	Manono
71.	Olwen	Manuel
72.	Barbara	Mapara
73.	Zelt	Marais
74.	David	Maralack
75.	Lornaj	Martin
76.	Andrew	Matseke
77.	Farai	Mbumbwa
78.	Buyile	Mdluli
79.	Adam	Mendelsohn
80.	Luyanda	Mgwexa
81.	Siyabonga	Mhlongo

82.	Lance	Michell
83.	Valerie	Mizrahi
84.	Elijah	Moholola
85.	Ronald	Moore
86.	Gay	Morris
87.	Oliver	Moses
88.	Bulelani	Mqolweni
89.	Sabatha	Mthwecu
90.	Rowyn	Naidoo
91.	Tracey	Naledi
92.	Nicoli	Nattrass
93.	Lwazi	Ncoluwe
94.	Caroline	Ncube
95.	Hlumani	Ndlovu
96.	Rendani	Nefale
97.	Sonwabo	Ngcelwane
98.	Silindile	Ngcobo
99.	Fred	Nicolls
100.	Frederic	Ntirenganya
101.	Siya	Ntuntwana
102.	Hanne	Nyokangi
103.	Ifeanyi	Okonkwo
104.	Yusuf	Omar
105.	Euraeffie	Oppon
106.	Gonda	Perez
107.	Robert	Petersen
108.	Jeremiah	Pietersen
109.	Komala	Pillay
110.	Martin	Plaut
111.	Xola	Pono
112.	Rethabile	Possa-Mogoera
113.	Phumza	Qwaqwa
114.	Simon	Rakei
115.	Manto	Rakgoale
116.	Medee	Rall
117.	Marie-Luise	Reiner
118.	Jacques	Rousseau
119.	Zainab	Ruhwanya
120.	Rebekka	Sandmeier
121.	Mandy	Sauls
122.	Chris	Saunders
123.	Kitso	Seti
124.	David	Shema
125.	Hanyani	Shilumani
126.	Carmelita	Shong
127.	Lulama	Sibiya
128.	Izu	Sichinga
129.	Michael	Silberbauer
130.	Dee	Smythe
131.	Sherry	Solman

132.	Rod	Solomons
133.	Mugsy	Spiegel
134.	Aisha	Sykes
135.	Kamva	Tabata
136.	Daniel	Tate
137.	Jennifer	Thomson
138.	Neziswa	Titi
139.	Tebogo	Tladi
140.	Siwe	Toto
141.	Thando	Tsotsobe
142.	Evariste	Umba
143.	Zephne	Van Der Spuy
144.	Glenn	Von Zeil
145.	Michael	Walimbwa
146.	Chris	Wiid
147.	Anna-Lise	Williamson
148.	Abimbola	Windapo
149.	Tanja	Winkler
150.	Dianna	Yach
151.	Paki	Zandile

Vice-Chancellor's Report to AGM Convocation 7 December 2023

I thank each of you members of Convocation who are attending this meeting. An important principle that has been reinforced this year is the role of different members of the campus community, working together as a committed whole, to keep the institution on track. You are an important part of the UCT community and you have a great deal to offer in terms of your experience and skills. On behalf of the executive, I welcome your questions, comments and suggestions for building the future of Africa's highest rated university.

Stability is being restored at UCT

This has been a year of restoring the University of Cape Town (UCT) to stable working relationships that create a well-functioning work environment for staff and students. Broadly, my number one goal as Vice-Chancellor interim has been to ensure that we had a well-functioning executive, including the deans and the executive directors, and that everything stays on course, particularly with regards to teaching and research.¹

UCT Council met on Saturday, 11 November 2023 to discuss the implementation plan in response to the recommendations made by the report of the independent panel of investigation on governance matters at UCT during the period from 2018 to 2022.

Council reaffirmed its commitment to remedying past governance failures and strengthening current structures by complying with UCT's regulations and policies and enforcing the Council code of conduct. A Council sub-committee will establish a framework to strengthen the university's governance, including the delineation of the oversight role of Council from the executive management function together with matters that fall within the purview of the Senate. Student governance via the Students' Representative Council and the role of the Institutional Forum remain important arms of institutional governance.

As the 2023 academic year draws to a successful close, UCT continues to develop cutting-edge teaching and learning strategies

Year-end examinations concluded on 17 November. The final graduation ceremonies for the year will be held on 14 and 15 December, adding to the 5 400 graduates we celebrated in March and the 104 PhD graduates we capped in July, when we also awarded four honorary doctorates. Graduation ceremonies reaffirm the success of the academic project and the key university functions of teaching and learning, alongside

¹ [VC interim's first 250 days in office bring stability, equanimity | UCT News](#)

research.²

This is all the more important within the higher education sector across South Africa, which has faced some of its most severe challenges in recent times, such as the impact of the pandemic.

The UCT community continues to seek the ideal balance between in-person and remote learning and teaching, to find appropriate platforms and methods to make the most of digital technologies while encouraging meaningful student-lecturer engagements. Strategies for improving student access and enrolment and supporting blended and remote learning are being developed, along with alternative methods for the assessment of student learning.

Perhaps the most important factor in reimagining assessment is the growing use of artificial intelligence in students' work. This new development requires us to develop strategies that work with AI instead of against it: to be forward thinking in how AI can enhance our experience and our students' experience in higher education. To this end we have embarked on the development of an institutional AI strategic initiative, the scope of which will include AI in our teaching activities, research and innovation in the domain of AI, and the use of AI in our systems and operations.

We have drafted a high-level enrolment planning strategy which we call the Size and Shape Proposal 2030/2035. It recognises UCT as a research-led, predominantly contact university that embraces online education in a range of disciplines. The proposal addresses ways improve student success and to maximise efficiencies in relation to throughput, management of the physical plant, and use of technological resources to aid the financial sustainability of the institution.

We are responding to the recommendations put to UCT by the recent Council for Higher Education (CHE) Audit Report regarding student access and success; student support; teaching and learning; academic staff; and systems and policies. Many actions highlighted in the Audit report were identified as areas of development and certain actions listed in the Improvement plan are already under way.

Research and Internationalisation are enlarging UCT's international footprint

The online recruitment pilot is entering its second year of agreements with service providers, and international student applications for 2024 have increased. We have finalised Memoranda of Understanding with Sheffield University in the UK and Sun-Yat Sen University in China and have renewed our agreement on the Confucius Institute. We are currently building joint taught Masters programmes with Sciences Po in France and are renewing our joint PhD agreements with Groningen University in the Netherlands and Bristol University in the UK.

² [VC interim's first 250 days in office bring stability, equanimity | UCT News](#)

The Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations was launched in July at a meeting of the Association of African Universities Conference for Rectors, Vice-Chancellors and Principals of African Universities in Namibia, with some 86 participants signing up to the Charter. Bristol University, UCT and UNISA hosted a joint workshop on the Charter at the Times Higher Education meeting in Sydney in September. UCT will host the secretariat for this initiative, which advances and uphold's Africa's contribution to global knowledge production.

In October, UCT hosted the first convening of the Mastercard Foundation's new Africa Higher Education Health Collaborative, which aims to strengthen primary health care and build jobs across Africa through transformative education and innovation. The partners in this collaboration include Amref International University, Addis Ababa University, African Leadership University, the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences, Ashesi University, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology, Moi University, UCT, and the University of Toronto.

We have also reviewed and celebrated the Mastercard Foundation's Scholars programme, which is reaching its 10-year milestone and approaching its 400th graduate. A proposal for the next 10 years is being drafted, targeting 1000 scholars over 10 years and contributing to masters study in the Africa Higher Education Health Collaborative and the Africa Higher Education Climate Collaborative, under development with Cambridge University, UCT, Makerere University and the University of Ghana.

The African Synthesis Centre for Climate Change, Environment and Development (ASCEND) was launched on 1 November to accelerate the pace and nature of climate change action across Africa and globally. It is both the first synthesis centre in Africa and the first that is globally focused on climate change and development. It will provide a platform for transdisciplinary teams of policy-makers, researchers and practitioners to leverage existing data and knowledge towards climate solutions.

On Monday we launched Critical Zones Africa: South & East: another partnership focusing on the effects of climate change on people's lives and developing strategies to build resilience. The initiative involves UCT, the University of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Malawi, the University of Zimbabwe, and the Human Sciences Research Council. The aim is to build an African environmentalism that links the work of social and natural sciences to help shape environmental governance policy and proposals.

Professor Mark Solms has been awarded a prestigious Oppenheimer Memorial Trust grant of R1.9 million that will enable UCT's Neuroscience Institute to open a new line of inquiry into how and why

consciousness works by using an artificial agent. This research has the potential to yield answers about what it fundamentally means to be human.³

We are also pleased to have an in-principle agreement from the National Research Foundation to fund the national Institute of Pandemic Preparedness and Prevention, involving 10 South African universities and multiple disciplines, to an amount of R180m over three years. UCT had a central role in the preparation of this proposal.

In October we celebrated the return of UCT Press to UCT Libraries, with the aim of creating a platform specifically for African voices in global academia. This new publishing model will take back our scholarship from commercial entities and make it accessible to all Africans who have access to the internet⁴.

Transformation and social responsiveness initiatives are helping to strengthen relationships within UCT community and with other stakeholders

Over three days last month, we were able to fulfil the process of restorative justice that UCT initiated five years ago, by returning Sutherland the nine skeletons that had been brought to our Human Skeleton Collection unethically in the 1920s. The reburial, which UCT co-hosted along with members of the descendants of the deceased, proceeded following the relevant authorisation by the Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture earlier this year and a permit previously granted by the South African Heritage Resource Agency.⁵

The Humanising Praxis Think tank series and the Anti-Racism Conversation series are important spaces for dialogue and thought leadership. Strategic conversations on Equity, Inclusion and Culture Change have been held and focus on how to improve institutional culture and systems within the university, and to develop a shared understanding of barriers to inclusion at UCT.

New legislation around sexual misconduct obligates any person in the university to report sexual harassment, intimidation, sexual assault, and rape to SAPS. The breadth of this legislation introduces some concerns, as there is currently no clarity as to how this law intersects with POPIA, the HPSCA Codes of Conduct and/or the consent of the survivor. Legal opinion is being sought in consultation with the Registrar's Office.

We continue to train in restorative justice processes to help strengthen interpersonal work relations. The mediators range from professors, heads of department, line managers, shuttle bus drivers and campus security officers. The restorative justice approach enables mediators to identify systems that enable offence

³ [Esteemed Oppenheimer Memorial Trust grant for UCT Neuroscience Institute's Mark Solms | University of Cape Town](#)

⁴ [Landmark moment as UCT Press comes home | UCT News](#)

⁵ [#UCTSutherlandReburial | UCT News](#)

and to encourage their review by the accountable governance committees.

More than 1900 students involved in peer education completed more than 300 Gender Based Violence workshops and Becoming Men programmes in 2023. The GBV workshops focussed on anti-oppression and consent.

We are in the process of recruiting for a number of executive staff positions

We have just announced that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Internationalisation, Professor Sue Harrison, will take early retirement from UCT next year.

In addition, selection committees are in progress for the positions of Vice-Chancellor, DVC: Teaching and Learning, Registrar, Executive Director for Human Resources, and the Executive Director for Communication and Marketing.

Professor Hussein Suleman has been appointed Dean of the Science Faculty and Professor Danwood Chirwa's appointment as Dean of Law has been extended.

The UCT community has pulled together to help address student needs

In October the campus community participated in UCT Day to raise funds in support of UCT students through four key initiatives:

Unlocking Futures Bursaries, to assist students who have completed the full academic requirements but cannot receive their degree certificates;

Student Wellness Support, with a focus on mental and emotional health;

the Gender-Based Violence Programmes and

the Food Sovereignty Programme, which provides grocery packs each month and toiletries every second month to students in need.

The Student Representative Council election this year yielded the highest turnout in years, at a 30.5% student participation rate. The newly elected SRC President, Hlamulo Khorommbi has committed to prioritising student mental health and well-being, ensuring improved support for international students, and working with university leadership to ensure that all academically eligible students are not excluded because of their financial circumstances.⁶

⁶ [2023_12_01_SRC.pdf \(uct.ac.za\)](#)

Financial assistance remains a top concern for many students. In the second half of 2023, NSFAS implemented the direct student allowance payment system. This has reduced the payment of NSFAS student allowances, with the worst performance in November. The Student Financial Aid Office continues to engage with NSFAS to find solutions and adapt our systems to cope with the changing NSFAS operational environment.

The number of students supported with financial aid has decreased, primarily as a result of NSFAS tightening its academic eligibility criteria. The decline over the last two years is largely due to an increase in the number of students not meeting the academic performance requirements, and the cap on accommodation costs at R45 000 per year.

The impending policy change at NSFAS for the 2024 academic year is expected to exacerbate the problems relating to student debt. Various factors, including the economic downturn, concessions granted in the past, competitive funding landscape, and reduced funding from the National Research Foundation, contribute to the rising debt.

UCT is also facing severe financial pressures that are leading to a period of austerity

The 2023 budget deficit is significantly higher than anticipated, and there is further pressure expected in 2024 due to declining state funding and fee income that is unlikely to keep pace with inflation. These factors pose serious financial sustainability risks to UCT.

Two significant factors have contributed to this challenging financial outlook:

The increased demand for NSFAS funding, coupled with NSFAS's poor financial health, has had a significant impact on UCT's financial aid underwriting. To address this, UCT is proposing changes to its financial aid policy for the 2024 budget.

The Department of Higher Education and Training has advised that the block grant allocation to the higher education sector is likely to decrease by 0.9% for the 2024/5 cycle. This reduction, coupled with UCT's limited capacity for growth, will likely result in UCT receiving a smaller proportional share of the block grant in 2024. In addition, universities must also manage enrolments to within 2% of their enrolment target, with financial penalties imposed in the case of deviations.

UCT is awaiting a revised Ministerial Statement from the Department of Higher Education and Training, as well as a formal pronouncement on recommended fee increases for 2024. In the meantime, we are taking steps to mitigate the financial risks it faces through a financial sustainability plan.

The growing number of higher education institutions facing leadership, management, and governance challenges has led insurers to propose a 20-25% premium increase for 2024 insurance renewals. The

insurers have also indicated that the current loss ratio is unsustainable and that cover may be withdrawn. UCT has paid an average of R71,000 per annum for this cover over the past five years. As of the last count, insurers have already made payments of R1.9 million, with costs expected to rise following the release of the UCT Panel report. The brokers have further advised that the Insurers have requested their attorneys to provide a legal opinion on the coverage of fees relating to other claims made against the policy.

Despite the recent upheavals at UCT, donors continue to express confidence in the university.

We have received some significant donations this year. This support keeps us hopeful for the future. At the same time, we are aware of how philanthropic giving has been severely affected by the pandemic as well as other global geopolitical events such as Black Lives Matter, the #MeToo campaign, the war in the Ukraine and the current Israel-Hamas conflict.

On 31 October 2023, donation income for 2023 stood at R708,191,404. Income for the same period in 2022 was R 413 564 774. A significant Mastercard Foundation donation this year of R300 million is the reason for the variance.

This year we received funding from 1 412 donors, up from 1 268 in 2022. More than half of donations this year came from trusts and foundations, although we have seen an increase in the number of individual donors.

In conclusion, UCT continues to lead the higher education sector across Africa as the highest ranked university on the continent, despite many challenges and upheavals. I commend staff members, across the university, for their sterling efforts, in difficult circumstances. Their commitment to the institution has enabled us to continue to excel in our core activities of teaching and research, and in so doing they demonstrate the power of the mission statement in UCT's Vision 2030 strategic plan: to unleash human potential to create a fair and just society.

Emer. Prof. Daya Reddy
Vice-Chancellor *interim*
7 December 2023