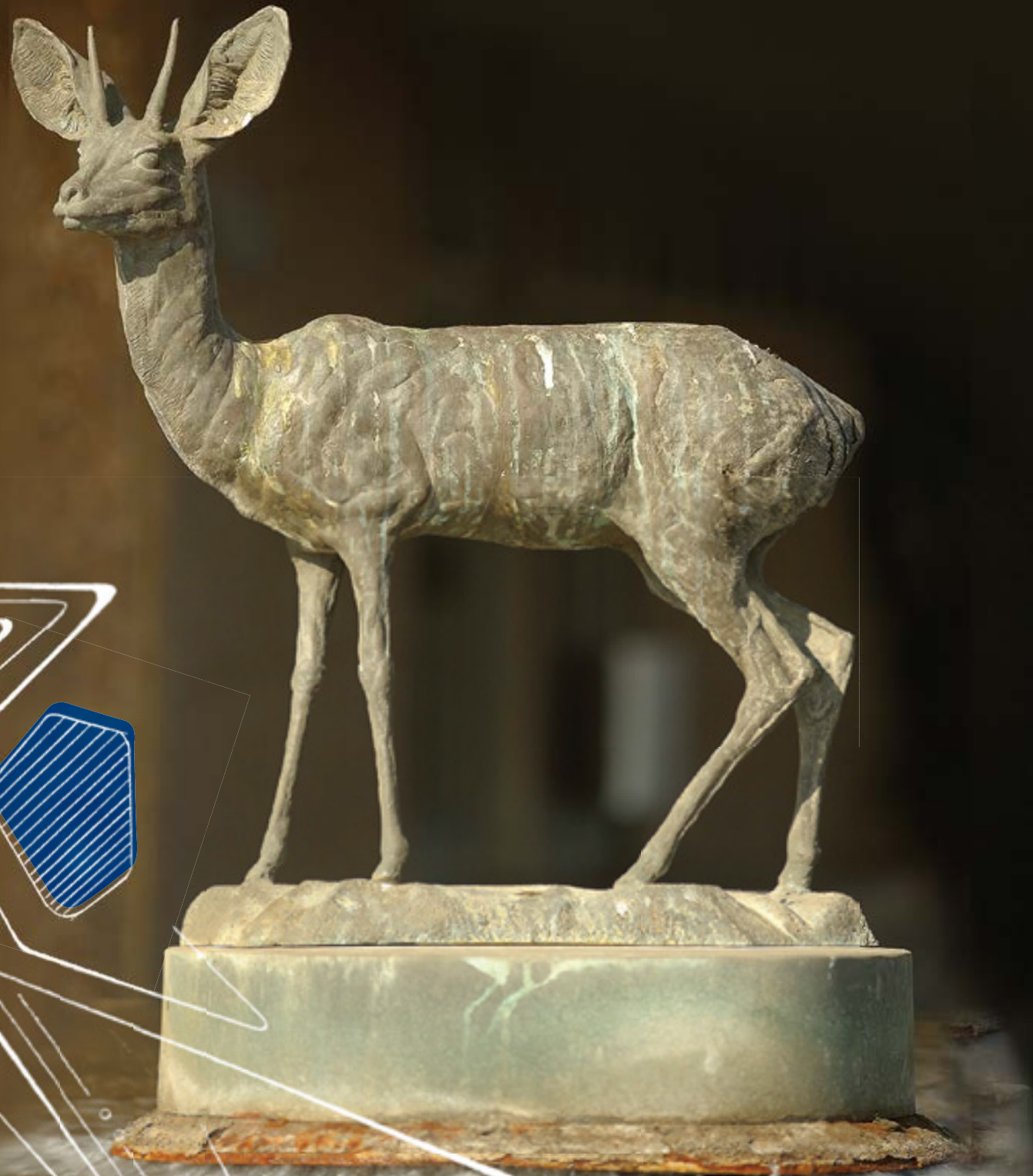
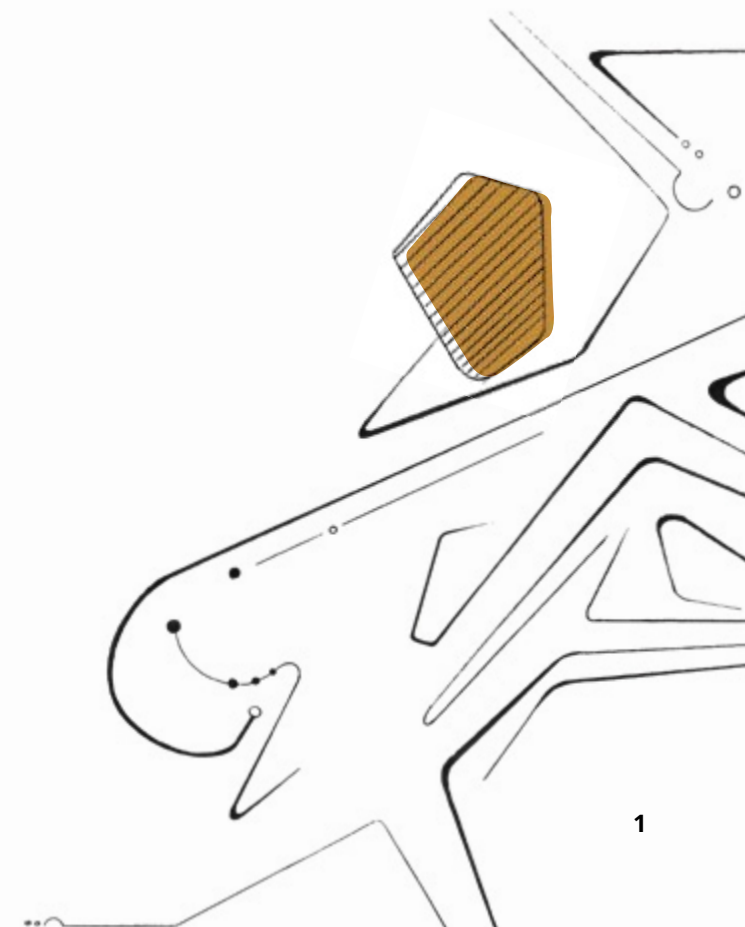


# Context



Credit: Lucinda du Toit

- 1. New leadership era
- 2. Higher education in South Africa
- 3. The cornerstones of UP 2025
- 4. Higher education funding — an institutional perspective
- 5. Transformation





# 1 | A new leadership era

The purpose of the *Ad Destinatum* volumes, held in the UP Archives, is to serve as a historic record of major institutional developments within specific timeframes. Each volume reflects the unique circumstances that shaped the institution's identity and academic project during the period under review. The sixth volume in the series is structured to capture the contextual catalysts that framed the period 2009 to 2018, and the leadership era of Prof Cheryl (CM) de la Rey as Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria.

The *Ad Destinatum VI* review period, 2009 to 2018, spans an era of renewed focus on the role of universities and the three missions of research, education and service, and their interrelated purposes. In the context of South Africa's young democracy, the urgency was for universities, and education more broadly, to contribute to building a just society, socio-economic development, societal transformation and substantive democratisation.<sup>1</sup> While there remained a recurrent focus on the 'private good' of universities for individuals, the emphasis continually returned to the 'public good', given the many and complex challenges faced by societies and the widely held expectation that universities must contribute to finding sustainable solutions.<sup>2</sup>

Globally, and in tandem with the massification of higher education, the emergence of a knowledge-driven economy and society was accelerated by the rapid expansion of information and communication technology. Often regarded as one of the most enduring institutions in the world, universities found themselves in uncharted territory, where their relevance and agility were tested. It was clear that, into the future, universities would be recognised for the ways in which they responded to, harnessed and managed the challenges of their contexts, and that these contexts would, in turn, directly shape the role of universities.

At the University of Pretoria, the appointment of Prof De la Rey as Vice-Chancellor and Principal in mid-2009 followed on the University's centenary celebrations in 2008. Prof De la Rey took office in November 2009, at the cusp of the development of a new long-term strategic plan for the institution. The strategy, soon to be known as UP 2025,<sup>3</sup> was central in shaping the thematic content and focus of *Ad Destinatum VI* and the many ways in which UP's identity as a university on African soil was strengthened during this leadership era.



Prof Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor and Principal 2009–2018

<sup>1</sup> TM Luescher. 2007. Higher education and the substantiation of democracy in South Africa. Report on the research seminar of the Higher Education Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom (HEIAAF) Task Team. Johannesburg.

<sup>2</sup> M Singh. 2001. Re-inserting the 'public good' into higher education transformation. *Kagisano Dialogue Series*, No1, 8-18. Council on Higher Education, Summer 2001.

<sup>3</sup> University of Pretoria. 2011. Strategic Plan: The vision, mission and plan of the University for 2025. (See Appendix A.)

Prof De la Rey was the first black and first female Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UP, and her appointment marked a significant turning point and new era in the development and transformation of the University.

### Policy development

The university system in South Africa had experienced a time of intensive policy formulation from the earlier 1990s, which culminated in the 1997 *White Paper 3, A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*<sup>4</sup> and the Higher Education (HE) Act of 1997.<sup>5</sup> While there have been a number of amendments to the HE Act, the *White Paper* remained a guiding policy framework for close to two decades. The major thrust of this policy framework was on transforming a grossly unequal system of access, provision, and knowledge production and dissemination. The second *White Paper*, published in 2013,<sup>6</sup> addressed the entire post-school education and training system and signalled a shift in focus to building an integrated post-school education and training system of which universities were one sector.

During this time, much has been written about the era of policy development in South Africa and the system restructuring and institutional alignment that were required, as a consequence. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) in the early 1990s laid the foundation for the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE). The NEPI investigation involved all areas of education, from early childhood to post-secondary and adult basic education. A project of the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC), chaired by Prof Jakes (GJ) Gerwel, then Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape, was undertaken between December 1990 and August 1992 with the outcomes captured in a series of 12 research texts and a framework document, published by Oxford University Press in 1992.<sup>7</sup>

The NCHE, established by presidential proclamation in December 1994, was one of the first policy actions of the post-apartheid Department of Education (DoE) and paved the way for the 1997 *White Paper* and HE Act. As succinctly summed up at the time, the Commission was charged “with advising

the government of national unity on issues concerning the restructuring of higher education by undertaking a situation analysis, formulating a vision for higher education and putting forward policy proposals designed to ensure the development of a well-planned, integrated, high quality system of higher education.”<sup>8</sup>

The University of Pretoria’s development during the review years mirrored in several ways change in higher education nationally and globally, and societal change more broadly. At a national level there were important policies, events and commissions that informed the actions of individual institutions and the university sector as a whole. To single out a few that were of direct relevance, especially to the strategies universities pursued:

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) ten-year plan, Innovation towards a knowledge-based economy 2008–2018 (2008)
- South Africa’s National Development Plan — Vision for 2030 (2011)
- Two higher education summits, hosted by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, in 2010 and 2015, respectively
- The Heher Commission into the feasibility of making higher education and training fee-free in South Africa, November 2017.

At regional and global levels, the African Union (AU) *Agenda 2063*, and the United Nations (UN) *Sustainable Development Goals* further framed the strategic direction of the University.

UP was deliberately positioned within these broad local, regional and international contexts to be a leading research-intensive university in Africa; a university that seeks to make a difference. Key pivots were quality research and strengthening UP’s international footprint; enrolment planning and steering the ‘shape and size’ of the institution; the student experience and enhancing access with success; infrastructural development and building an environment in which students and staff could thrive; and engagement with local communities and in societal challenges.

## 2 | Higher education in South Africa

Dr Diane Parker, DDG: University Education, DHET<sup>9</sup>

In 2009, a new national Ministry and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) were established in order to integrate post-school education and training into a single coordinated system to enable “a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path”<sup>10</sup>. This brought together, under one umbrella, universities, further education and training colleges, and adult education and skills development. The previous national Department of Education (DoE) was restructured as the Department of Basic Education (DBE), with an exclusive focus on schooling.

For universities, the decade that preceded this structural change was marked by two system-level imperatives aligned with the *White Paper 3* (1997)<sup>11</sup> and the *National Plan for Higher Education* (2001):<sup>12</sup> increasing access and participation — or the massification of the system; and restructuring a diversified public higher education landscape, both key elements for the transformation of the system. The decade that followed was marked by moderate growth aligned to the mandate of institutions, supporting students enrolled to succeed, and collaboration and partnerships to strengthen the system.

The period 2009 to 2018 will also be remembered as a period when the higher education and training system was rocked by violent disruption and volatility within an increasingly financially and politically hostile environment, as a result of the Fallist movement spearheaded by students. As the decade progressed, the imperative was not simply to speed up the rate of transformation, but importantly, to ‘decolonise’ higher education.

### Policy, planning and realignment

In April 2010, the first of two higher education stakeholder summits was hosted by the new Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande. Following the summit, a key priority was to develop a *Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (January 2012). The paper conceptualised post-school education and training (PSET), not as a post-secondary system, but as a system serving the youth and adults, no

matter what their level of education had been in the past. The *Green Paper* was followed by a new *White Paper*<sup>13</sup> released in early 2014, and a subsequent process towards developing a new National Plan for PSET (NPPSET).<sup>14</sup>

These policy and planning documents and processes took into account the *National Development Plan — Vision for 2030*,<sup>15</sup> and contextual issues which resulted in shifts in the role of universities as public higher education institutions. For example, the importance of building capacity in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector was again foregrounded, and the need to grow this sector at a greater rate than the university sector to ‘invert the pyramid’. The concept of Community Education and Training (CET) was introduced, targeting adults who had not been to school, or who had dropped out of school and could not access post-secondary education.

Over the decade, a number of Ministerial Committees and task teams were appointed to advise on a range of issues and to review progress and develop policy:

- Ministerial Committees included the Review of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS, 2010); Student Housing (2012); University Funding (2013); Fee Free Higher Education (2013); African Languages as Mediums of Instruction (2015); and the Black Professoriate (2018).
- DHET task teams included: the review of the HE Act

<sup>4</sup> Department of Education. 1997. *White Paper 3. A programme for the transformation of higher education*. Pretoria.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Education. Higher Education Act 1997. Act No.101 of 1997.

<sup>6</sup> DHET. 2013. *White Paper for post-school education and training: Building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school education system*.

<sup>7</sup> It is relevant to include the NECC here as in the years 2015 to 2017, at the height of the #FeesMustFall student protests, there was an attempt to replicate the NECC model in order constructively to engage with students and harness the destructive consequences of the protests.

<sup>8</sup> N Cloete and J Muller. 1998. ‘South African higher education reform: what comes after post-colonialism?’ *European Review* 6(04), 525–542, October 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Dr Parker was the Deputy Director-General: University Education of the DHET, first in an acting capacity, from July 2010 to January 2021. In 2021 she joined the University of Pretoria.

<sup>10</sup> DHET. 2010. Revised Strategic Plan 2010/11 to 2014/15, p.8.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Education. 1997. *White Paper 3. A Programme for Higher Education Transformation*, Government Gazette No. 18207 (3), 15 August 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Education. 2001. *National Plan for Higher Education*, February 2001. Government Gazette No.22138 (230), 9 March 2001.

<sup>13</sup> DHET. 2013. *White Paper for Post School Education and Training: Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System*.

<sup>14</sup> The first consultative version of the NPPSET was completed in early 2017. However its development and subsequent release for consultation was interrupted by a host of unanticipated events including the #FeesMustFall campaign, the Fees Commission and multiple changes in the responsible Minister (in October 2017, April 2018 and May 2019). After numerous iterations, it was due to be published towards the end of 2021. However, by 2023 it had not been formally released. This illustrates the disruption in the work of the DHET over the last five years of the decade.

<sup>15</sup> National Planning Commission. 2013. *National Development Plan — Vision for 2030*. The Presidency.

(2016); the development of good governance guidelines (2017); the review of the research outputs policy (2015); the development of the creative outputs policy (2017); internationalisation of higher education (draft gazetted in 2018, final in 2020); and the review of languages in education policy (draft gazetted in 2017, final in 2020).

These committees and task teams made a significant contribution to the development of new policies and practices for the higher education sector.

*White Paper 3* envisioned a single coordinated public higher education system structurally transformed through mergers and incorporations of 37 institutions in apartheid South Africa (universities and technikons) and numerous colleges of education. By the end of 2010, the system comprised 23 universities — 11 traditional universities, six comprehensive universities and six universities of technology, and enrolment had grown by 82% from 495 356 in 1994 to 892 936 by 2010. While some institutions, like the University of Pretoria, retained their original names, the majority took on new names and identities.

In 2010, a strategic decision was taken to establish new universities. The Ministerial Task Team, co-chaired by Profs Cheryl de la Rey and Thandwa (T) Mthembu (Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Technology), made recommendations in August 2011. Following an intense process of planning and discussion, the University of Mpumalanga and the Sol Plaatje University were established in August 2013. In 2015, a third new university, the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences

University, was established after a process of unbundling the former Medical University of South Africa campus from the University of Limpopo, following a failed merger.

### Steering mechanisms

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the 1997 *White Paper 3* continued to frame the transformation of the higher education system in the decades that followed. In this context, three mechanisms were identified as critical in steering the development of the higher education system: funding, planning and quality assurance.

### Funding

The funding framework<sup>16</sup>, introduced in 2004, is a transparent instrument determining the distribution of funds to institutions through block and earmarked grants. The block grant is determined by performance in relation to enrolment targets, and graduate and research outputs. Earmarked grants are grants for specific purposes<sup>17</sup> linked to capacity development and transformation in the system.

In 2013, the framework was reviewed by a Ministerial Task Team, amidst concerns that it did not support a differentiated system and was driving the system towards homogeneity. The review showed that this was not the case, and recommended that it should be retained with some changes. A revised framework was drafted but its approval was interrupted by major student upheavals in the system in 2015, sparked by double-digit fee increases at high-fee institutions, and the

subsequent Presidential Fees Commission and processes around fee compacts.

The Department made the decision, following the Ministerial Review of University Funding,<sup>18</sup> to phase out the teaching development and research development grants (T/RDGs), which had proved to be problematic and were not being used to support success as intended, in favour of supporting a University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP). From 2015, unspent T/RDGs funds in the system were pooled to support the new Staffing South Africa's Universities' Framework (SSAUF) and collaborative projects or programmes designed to support student success and capacity development in the system. At the same time, a new Historically Disadvantaged Institutions' grant was introduced to assist the holistic development of these institutions.

The new Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), part of the SSAUF, was launched in October 2015. This was the precursor to a number of different programmes to support the transformative development of staff, students and institutions. A key aspect underpinning the programme was collaboration and partnerships (international and local) for the development of all aspects of the system, including the University Staff Doctoral Programme (USDP) and the establishment of the United States–South Africa (US–SA) network, the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Programme, and the Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme (HELM). The first cycle of the fully developed UCDP,<sup>19</sup> providing funding to universities on the basis of institutional plans, and expanding the implementation of the SSAUF and other collaborative programmes, was implemented in 2018.

### Planning

Funding is intrinsically linked to planning and undertaken at national and institutional levels. This included enrolment and infrastructure planning, and the development of system capacity and quality.

Over the decade, enrolment planning negotiations leading to institutional targets and the national enrolment plan, were driven by two key imperatives: the targets for higher

education set in the National Development Plan (NDP); and ensuring that the targets set by institutions could be supported by their human and infrastructural resources, which had not kept up with growth in the system in the previous decade.

While growth was seen as important to enable access, student success was equally important. Based on agreements with universities on individual enrolment plans for the period 2011 to 2013, the Department projected an average annual growth rate of 1,14% and 3,76% for undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments, respectively. However, the actual audited growth over this period was higher than projected at an average of 3,38% for undergraduate and 5,08% for postgraduate per annum. The over-enrolment led to underfunding of the system and a strain on NSFAS, contributing to institutions increasing fees at rates higher than inflation, often in an attempt to 'balance their budgets' in the face of declining state funding.<sup>20</sup>

In preparing for the second enrolment planning period (2014–2016) the DHET made a strategic decision to change its processes and introduce a longer planning horizon of six years (2014–2019), with a mid-year review after the first three years. This was accompanied by the phasing-in of financial penalties, first for under-enrolling on overall targets, and later for over-enrolling on first-time entry targets, in an attempt to persuade institutions to adhere to their contracts with the Minister. While some institutions argued that they were responding to the NDP targets and opening access by over-enrolling, this position was not supported by the DHET as the sustainability of the system as a whole had to be protected. The focus needed to move from access (increasing enrolments) to success (improved graduation and throughput).

Over the period 2014 to 2019, the total headcount enrolment in the university sector reached 1 074 912 in 2019 (an average annual growth of 1,6% per annum), student throughput rates improved steadily, doctoral outputs increased significantly (from 2 258 in 2014 to 3 445 in 2019), and the percentage of university staff with doctoral qualifications improved (from 43% in 2014 to 48% in 2019).

The following were published by the DHET and/or gazetted in the period 2009 to 2018:

2010	Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Review of the National Financial Aid Scheme
2011	Report on the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Provision of Student Housing at South African Universities; extract published in the Government Gazette, No 35540, Notice 201, 25 July 2012
2013	Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities; foreword published in the Government Gazette, No 37384, Notice 143, 28 February 2014
2013	Report of the Ministerial Working Group on Free University Education for the Poor in South Africa
2015	Report on the use of African Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education
2015	Research Outputs Policy, Government Gazette No 38552, Notice 188, 11 March 2015
2015	The Higher Education Amendment Bill, Government Gazette No 39384 of 9 November 2015, promulgated as the Higher Education Amendment Act 9 of 2016
2017	A code of good governance practice and governance indicators for South African universities
2017	Policy on the evaluation of creative outputs and innovations produced by public higher education institutions, Government Gazette No 40819, Notice 395, 28 April 2017

<sup>16</sup> Department of Education. 2004. A new funding framework: How government grants are allocated to public higher education institutions.

<sup>17</sup> These evolved over time, linked to needs in the system. In the period under review there were important innovations in the system linked to the infrastructure and efficiency grant, the introduction of the university capacity development grant and the historically disadvantaged institutions' (HDIs) development grant.

<sup>18</sup> DHET. 2013. Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Review of the Funding of Universities.

<sup>19</sup> DHET. 2017. Ministerial Statement on the Implementation of the University Capacity Development Programme through Effective Management and Utilisation of the University Capacity Development Grant 2018–2020, released March 2017.

<sup>20</sup> By 2013, the per capita funding per student enrolled in the system had increased in real terms by 3,01% since 2004; however, over that period enrolments had increased by 31,89% and infrastructure and support needs were growing at a much higher rate.

## Quality assurance

The role of quality assurance in steering the system had become increasingly important in the years following the publication of the initial Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) in 2008, and the revised Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), published in 2014. The Council on Higher Education (CHE), whose responsibility it is to ensure the quality of the system, experienced many challenges over this period. Universities were required to re-curriculate their programmes in line with the HEQSF, and to ensure that aligned programmes were accredited before commencement of the 2019 academic year.<sup>21</sup> This process was extremely bureaucratic, focusing on ensuring that programmes were accredited and registered by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and required enormous institutional energy.

An unintended consequence was that many institutions focused on compliance and may have missed the opportunity to interrogate their programme and qualification mix (PQM) and curricula, especially in the wake of the #FeesMustFall movement. With the benefit of hindsight, it also became clear that institutions did not fully understand the process and the implementation of a complex system invariably led to a range of issues and misalignment of the regulators' databases.

In addition to student access and success, *White Paper 3* had identified research as an important area for the development of the sector and, in 2004, the Department implemented a policy for evaluating and subsidising research to incentivise the system.<sup>22</sup> By 2010, the research outputs of the system had increased substantially and continued to do so over the next decade. The weighted research output per capita was 1,12, up from 0,95 in 2005. By 2019 it was 2,01.<sup>23</sup> However, there were some questions regarding the quality of research outputs and, at the same time, there was strong motivation for the inclusion of creative outputs and innovations in subsidised research outputs. The revised policy on research outputs was published in 2015, and a new policy on creative outputs and innovations in 2017.

Over this period, the issues of research ethics and predatory publishing were identified as major concerns. Further, the importance of collaborative research and international

research partnerships was emphasised. A significant intervention was the DHET's partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) to support academic staff to gain doctoral qualifications and thereby improve research productivity and capacity, and system-level research and development (R&D).<sup>24</sup>

## An era of discontent

The pressure on the university system to grow, the increased participation of students from poor and working-class families, the lack of additional funding to support them, and institutions increasing fees at unsustainable rates — together with the growing discontent of students at the lack of fundamental change — created the perfect conditions for increasing and often violent disruption across the public higher education sector.

While access to higher education had opened up to economically disadvantaged students through the expansion of NSFAS, year-on-year, funding became severely limited and many students who were accepted were not able to fully fund themselves. This led to increasing debt and hardship for students, including hunger and uncondusive living arrangements. At the same time, the political message and norm had become that academically deserving students should not be denied access to higher education due to a lack of financial means. The Minister of Higher Education and Training urged institutions to allow all such students to register, and indicated that funding would need to be found to support them. This led to a situation of increasing enrolment of students who qualified for NSFAS funding but either had no funding or capped funding. As a result, there was an increasing burden of debt, on individual students and institutions that carried the debt burden in unpaid fees.

Over the period 2010 to 2015, the total student debt in the system more than doubled from R3,2 billion to R6,5 billion, and purportedly a significant amount of this debt was owed by about 75 000 underfunded NSFAS qualifying students registered in institutions in 2015.<sup>25</sup> Simultaneously, high fees were squeezing the so-called 'missing middle' students who did not qualify for NSFAS, based on household income, out of universities.

<sup>21</sup> Government Gazette No.40123, 6 July 2016. Notice of last enrolment date for first-time entering students into non-aligned HEQSF programmes.

<sup>22</sup> Department of Education. 2003. Policy for the measurement of research outputs of public higher education institutions.

<sup>23</sup> DHET. 2020. Report on the evaluation of the 2019 universities' research output.

<sup>24</sup> J Mouton et al. 2019. The Quality of South Africa's Research Publications. Pretoria. See also J Mouton et al., 2018. The Silent Majority. A study commissioned by the Department of Science and Technology on building a cadre of emerging scholars for higher education in South Africa.

<sup>25</sup> The Presidency. 2015. Report of the Presidential Task Team on Short-Term Student Funding Challenges at Universities, November 2015.



A second stakeholder summit on higher education transformation was held in October 2015, at the height of this season of discontent.<sup>26</sup> The purpose of the Summit was to engage in critical dialogue on the higher education system, to take stock of the changes since the first Summit in 2010, and to re-imagine higher education transformation. The Summit provided a platform for student leaders to come together from across the country. The first day coincided with the explosive protest at the University of the Witwatersrand after an announcement of a double-digit fee increase for the following year, launching the #FeesMustFall campaign nationwide.

That the protests erupted in a historically advantaged institution, and then spread across the system in such a violent manner, was unprecedented. The sector was accustomed to annual protests at the beginning of the year in the more disadvantaged institutions, but now it was driven by students at advantaged institutions.

### Consequences of student protests

#FeesMustFall student demands led to an agreement, brokered by the then President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, towards the end of October 2015, on a 0% fee increase for 2016, that students would return to their campuses and write exams without further disruption, and that other matters raised, such as the insourcing of all workers, student debt and NSFAS student funding, would be dealt with through engagements at a later stage.

While the agreement was intended to quieten the protests and ensure that exams would take place, it was followed by further violent protests and destruction of property, with the demand for free, quality, decolonised higher education and the immediate insourcing of workers reverberating across the country.

As Lange (2020)<sup>27</sup> subsequently wrote, the goal of access and redress — expressed in the 1997 *White Paper 3* and the *National Plan for Higher Education* (NPHE) of 2001 — changed into the goal of free higher education for all students by 2015, and the goal of reconstruction and development through higher education changed into the goal of ‘decolonising’ universities and the country.

“The very fact that the #FeesMustFall generation has dismissed ‘transformation’ as a failed political project invites reflection on what universities, and government, mean when they talk about transformation today.”

Institutions across the country reacted to these challenges. Some immediately insourced workers in an attempt to quell the disruption. Most institutions had to complete the academic year through the introduction of online teaching and other methods to complete the syllabus and examinations under difficult conditions. Institutions also sought to protect staff and students, by sourcing additional security at considerable cost.

The securitisation of campuses and the escalation of violent confrontations was seen across the sector for some time, extending into 2016 and beyond. This acted as a catalyst for many institutions to digitalise their enterprise and develop mitigating strategies to deal with future disruptions. Institutions that invested in IT infrastructure during this period were well positioned to pivot to online learning when confronted by more revolt challenges. UP was one of these.

Following the enveloping student protests, there was a realisation that the system needed to galvanise itself and find ways of cooperating and collaborating for the greater good of all. Universities South Africa (USAf) and the DHET worked closely together in the following years to support collaboration and partnerships to strengthen the sector. Many of these were funded through the UCDP.

### The Fees Commission and interim measures

Following the 2015 disruptions, in January 2016, the President announced, the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training. Chaired by Judge Heher, the Commission came to be known as the Fees Commission, and completed its report in August 2017.<sup>28</sup>

As an interim measure, and while the Commission was doing its work, the DHET significantly increased funding into the baseline of universities. This was to make up the shortfall due to the 0% fee increase agreement for 2016, and subsequent agreements for 2017, and provided additional funds to support NSFAS qualifying students.

The Commission recommended that baseline funding to universities be increased to 1% of GDP, that student tuition fees should be regulated, and that a universal income-contingent loan system be implemented to ensure access to higher education for all.

Further recommendations related to the block funding to post-school education and training (PSET) institutions that needed to increase in line with the increased costs of quality education and infrastructure; that a cost-sharing model be implemented for university education; that the community education and training (CET) sector be funded in the same way as basic education; that public technical and vocational education training (TVET) education be fee-free (100% funding), and that stipends be made available through TVET colleges, for needy students to cover the full cost of study.

Flouting the Commission's recommendations, President Jacob Zuma announced, in December 2017, that the South African government would phase in fully subsidised free higher education<sup>29</sup> for students in universities from families earning up to R350 000 per annum, starting with the first-year cohort in 2018. At the same time, recognising that subsidy funding had been under pressure, Zuma announced that additional funding would be phased-in into the baseline of public universities to reach 1% of GDP within five years. This would be done while the university sector worked out a fee regulation policy to ensure that fee increases were reasonable and fees across the system were affordable.

The years following 2015 were characterised by annual fee compacts linked to CPI inflation for the system, while significant additional funding was injected into the block grant and for NSFAS qualifying students, bringing the proportion of undergraduate students supported from approximately 21% in 2015 to 56% by 2019. Notwithstanding the additional injection of funding into the baseline of institutions, the sudden implementation of the scheme created many challenges, including a collapse of the NSFAS systems.

By the end of the decade, mainly due to the government decision to include accommodation, food and transport as part of what constituted ‘free higher education’, the scheme would prove to be unsustainable.

### Resilience and growth

The university system, while it struggled through some of the most disruptive and difficult times in its history, showed resilience as it continued to grow and improve its relevance and capacity.

The shock of students’ disillusionment forced universities to reconsider their positions in society, to focus on what matters and how students could better be supported to

succeed. Further, the importance of open dialogue with students, developing student leadership capability to ensure that university spaces remain critical and open, finding ways to balance the security of staff and students and at the same time supporting constructive learning and teaching, research and living, were all challenges that had to be faced. Universities had to become more responsive to their publics, recognising their local embeddedness and the importance of engagement.

The University of Pretoria navigated these spaces, building its reputation while being responsive to the changing context, and strengthening its position within the South African higher education landscape. It played a unique role under the leadership of Prof De la Rey. There were many instances of collaboration and system-level development processes; below a few illustrations:

In 2014, Prof De la Rey agreed to a partnership with the DHET in the implementation of the Sector Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Support Programme (SPMESP), a strategic programme which supported institutions’ capacity to monitor the implementation of plans across the higher education sector, and to undertake specific research to inform developments in the system. In this sense, UP played a critical role in supporting, among others, the development of the infrastructure programme, the state’s international scholarships programme, the university capacity development programme, the research outputs and the creative outputs evaluation processes.

Prof De la Rey embraced the nGAP programme, pledging to support double the posts that the Department funded at the University. She supported the implementation of a number of collaborative programmes, including the USDP and the United States–South Africa network, agreeing that a coordinating structure could be located at UP. This was an important collaborative project between the 26 South African

<sup>26</sup> Department of Higher Education and Training. 2016. Report on the Second National Higher Education Transformation Summit: International Convention Centre, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, 15–17 October 2015. Published January 2016.

<sup>27</sup> L Lange. 2020. Transformation Revisited: Twenty Years of Higher Education Policy in South Africa, Chapter 3, in I Rensburg, S Motala and M Cross (Eds), *Transforming Universities in South Africa: Pathways to Higher Education Reform*. African Higher Education: Developments and Perspectives, Vol 6, p.43. Brill.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.justice.gov.za/commissions/feeshet/index.html>

<sup>29</sup> This was implemented as the NSFAS managed the DHET Bursary Fund for first-time entry poor and working-class students in the 2018 academic year.

universities and 12 US-based universities supporting over 150 staff members to undertake their doctoral studies.

UP also contributed significantly to increasing doctoral graduates across the system and increasing the proportion

of staff with doctoral qualifications. By 2019, UP produced a total of 399 doctoral graduates (11,5% of doctoral graduates nationally), with just under 70% of its instructional and research staff holding doctoral qualifications, the highest proportion of any public university in South Africa.



Futhi Mtoba, Chairperson of the University of Pretoria Council, Prof Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Mary Metcalfe, Director-General in the Department of Higher Education and Training, Prof Lumkile Nkuhlu, Chancellor of the University of Pretoria

### 3 | The cornerstones of UP 2025

As the new Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria, in her inaugural address on 16 April 2010,<sup>30</sup> Prof De la Rey presented an analysis of changing contexts and what national and global trends meant for the role of universities, and more specifically, for UP's strategy into the future. Resilience and adaptability were features that enabled universities to survive through historical changes. What distinguished those who not only survive but thrive and succeed was the ability to focus firmly on academic excellence while being adaptable and responsive to changing social and economic circumstances. Knowledge and innovation had become drivers of economic growth and national competitiveness, while technological advances had changed the nature of academic work — both teaching and learning, and research. South Africa was a country of sharp and stark contrasts and reconstructing South African society into a democracy necessitated a further level of change that compelled universities to respond.

Understanding the role of UP as a public university in a young democracy was important in the development of the University's long-term strategy. The reasons were clear: firstly, in addition to developing human capital, a strong, resilient and peaceful democracy depended on a shared sense of "civic responsibility, social interconnectedness and social justice". Secondly, in executing this role as a public university, it was important to recognise that UP operated in an interdependent, highly competitive global world.

Prof De la Rey acknowledged that although there was no blueprint for the strategies that needed to be pursued, the core ingredients were clear from the experiences of other countries, particularly middle-income and developing countries: the quality of the total student experience — including social, cultural and sporting activities; the 'what and how' of teaching and learning and the curriculum, and whether the institution was sufficiently geared to a world of rapid change; diversity and transformation, and the need explicitly to recognise the University as a social space where individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to work and to learn. At the same time as it improved the quality of the student experience, the University needed to intensify its research productivity and impact; develop a high quality curriculum at undergraduate levels, which inspires a passion for inquiry; and grow postgraduate enrolment, particularly at the doctoral level. These required clearly articulated curriculum pathways from undergraduate to postgraduate study.

Research and scholarship had become "a collaborative, communitarian pursuit involving teams of scholars and students in networks that cross institutional and national boundaries". This meant that UP needed to create an enabling environment to leverage discipline-specific expertise and to bring together scholars across boundaries to tackle the most pressing problems facing the country and the African region. These included climate change, food security, conflict mediation, poverty alleviation and other such issues that had the best chance of being addressed through multidisciplinary teams that, in addition to scientific expertise, "exercise ethical judgement, empathy and a commitment to social justice".

Community engagement was tied to promoting good citizenship and sustainable development. Sustainability and sustainable development were terms often used in contemporary society. For Prof De la Rey, this required a holistic perspective in order to see the connections and interconnections between systems and institutions. One of the challenges was to grow the University's resource base and to ensure that available resources were efficiently and effectively used.

Prof De la Rey concluded her address with a comment often made — "the future is not predictable and there are no certainties". She nevertheless expressed certainty that the commitment to "quality, relevance, a culture of inquiry and sustainability"<sup>31</sup> will be the principles that will drive the strategy for building the second 100 years of the University of Pretoria.

<sup>30</sup> University of Pretoria. Installation of Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Cheryl de la Rey. 16 April 2010. What follows in this section is a synthesis of the main issues covered in her address.

<sup>31</sup> These were refined into what came to be called 'navigational markers' in subsequent documents and in UP 2025 — quality, relevance, diversity and sustainability.

Her sweeping analysis of context, in fact, set up a framework — or indeed a blueprint — for the University's strategy over the medium to longer term.

### The transition to a long-term strategy

In June 2010, an institutional planning document<sup>32</sup> set the parameters for the UP 2011 Plan, the final year in the implementation of the University's previous strategic plan, 2007–2011.<sup>33</sup> Marked by the transition between two sets of strategic plans, the planning framework, it was said, “codified the nascent consensus” that had arisen in the many *berade*<sup>34</sup> and workshops held under the guidance of the new Vice-Chancellor since her appointment, and set the direction UP would need to take over the longer term.

This document, and other planning documents that followed, were intended to be enabling, not restrictive — to encourage members of the University community to develop “ambitious dreams”, to envisage a university with a prominent international profile (a critical issue foregrounded in 2010),<sup>35</sup> and to conceive workable plans for ensuring this. By the time the development of the new long-term strategy was launched on 20 September 2010, the UP community was asked to “imagine UP in 2025” — again a familiar refrain compelling the University community to action. The appeal was for contributions to a strategic framework and plan that would strengthen and embed a vision and identity for the University into the future.

There was a further process initiated in 2010 that directly influenced the development of the University of Pretoria's long-term strategy: four task teams were appointed to undertake detailed environmental scans and a SWOT analysis of the University's strengths, weaknesses, and externally, opportunities and threats. The task team reports were presented to the UP Executive and Senior Management in November 2010, and agreement was reached to use the outcomes as the conceptual cornerstones in the development of the University's Strategic Plan 2025.

It was clear at the time, that the status quo position in terms of existing practices was not a sufficiently strong basis from which to pursue a future-oriented vision for the University. That said, it was also recognised that fundamental long-term strategies related to core functions and public accountability were unlikely to change over the next 15 years. The focus therefore needed to be on harnessing existing strengths that would embed the University's distinct role and identity, nationally and globally, in rapidly changing contexts.<sup>36</sup>

The spheres of influence of UP — current and future — were many and meant that strategic choices would have to be made to ensure the greatest impact and visibility for the University, and therefore that trade-offs would be necessary.

Major external factors were associated with globalisation, the impact of technology and environmental changes that would affect both research and teaching and learning. In essence, therefore, “in a shrinking world, the research we do and the way we teach will increasingly be placed in the international spotlight”; the requirement to grow our international strength was an imperative.<sup>37</sup>

What follows below is a synthesis of the main themes in this collective body of work:

#### Building on strengths

A central theme, expressed in different ways, was the time and place locality of the University of Pretoria — in the capital city, in South Africa and on the African continent, and simultaneously, in a 21st century world where knowledge production was the global currency of universities.<sup>38</sup>

The University of Pretoria had distinct strengths which related to its sheer size and diversity with respect to the profile of students, the wide range of core and professional programmes it offered, and its spread of campuses. It had distinct areas of research excellence of world reknown.

Relevance, diversity, sustainability and quality were issues that were strongly profiled, and are elaborated on in Chapter 3. It was a well-functioning and financially stable institution.

However, in order to retain its sustainability as a well-functioning and stable university, several conditions needed to be met, among which were planned enrolment growth that would entrench the identity of UP as a research-intensive university. Students would need to fit this profile and have the ability and interest to pursue university studies; teaching and learning would need to follow a questioning or an inquiry-led approach and strengthen the pipeline to postgraduate studies; research would need to be relevant to local contexts and be recognised in the global scientific community.

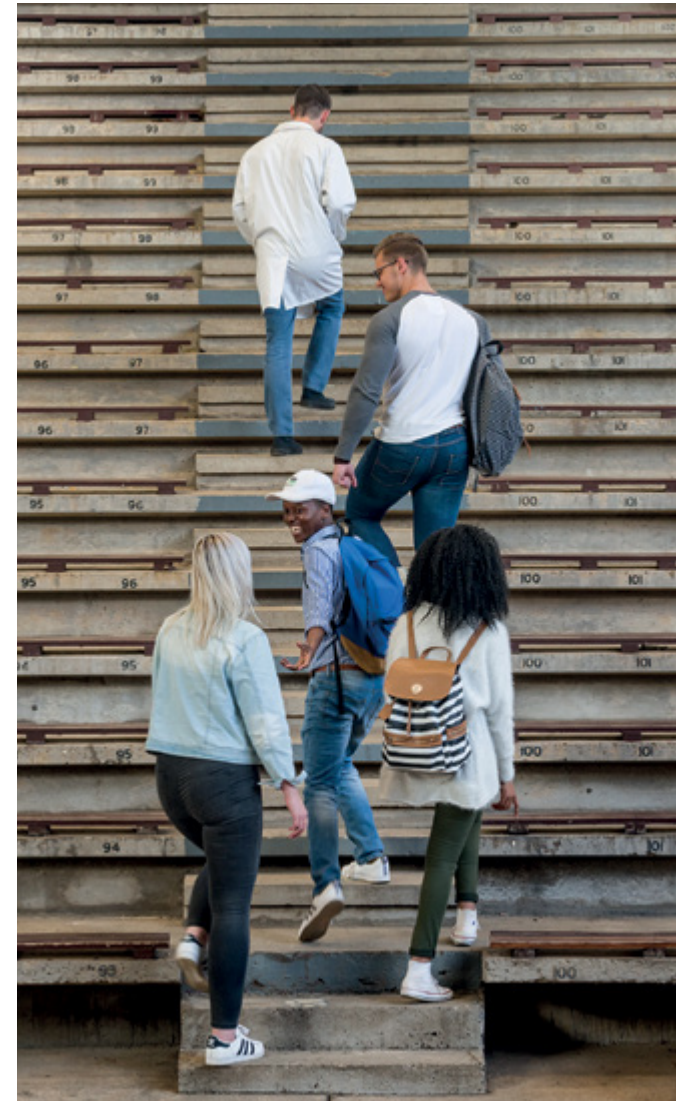
#### 21st century knowledge-driven world

Much has been written about the consequences of a 21st century knowledge economy and world, made possible by the ICT revolution, and its impact on the role of universities.

An influential social theorist, Manuel Castells,<sup>39</sup> informed debates in South African higher education circles and in the realm of politics. Castells argued that the rise of information technology and globalisation have led to a new kind of network society that operates on processes of variable inclusion and exclusion. His detailed and provocative analyses of the consequences of what he termed the “global informational capitalism”, supported by an independently occurring technological revolution centred on information and communication technologies, caught the imagination of many scholars in South Africa.

The world was increasingly characterised by those communities and places that were included in rapid developments in knowledge production and technological innovation, and those who were on the periphery. Castells referred to the latter as the “Fourth World”, which can be large tracts of land in the global South without functional states, inhabited by poverty-stricken communities, or entire ghettoised neighbourhoods in Northern cities. In the early 2000s he was twice invited to meet with the then President Thabo Mbeki who appointed a ministerial task team to explore the possibilities (and threats) for South Africa's development.

UP had already harnessed the possibilities afforded to it by expanded networks and partnerships in several ways, especially in the realm of research and, at the time, perhaps to a lesser extent in teaching and learning. Central to these were the ICT platforms which made new linkages and forms of knowledge production and information dissemination,



in addition to systems for the effective management and operations of the University possible.

#### Knowledge divides and ‘wicked problems’

A World Social Science report published in 2013<sup>40</sup> provided extensive analyses across regions on the divides in knowledge production, dissemination and use. The conclusions were clear: knowledge divides occur as a result of inequalities and asymmetries in the accumulation, transmission and use of knowledge in different societies and regions. As described in the report, given huge disparities in research capacities across countries and regions, knowledge divides were manifest at

<sup>32</sup> University of Pretoria. 2010. Institutional Planning for 2011: A strategic overview for compiling faculty and support service plans. June 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Strategic Plan of the University of Pretoria, 2007–2011. *The Innovation Generation: Creating the Future*.

<sup>34</sup> *Berade* are deliberations, an Afrikaans word often used to describe workshops or think tanks.

<sup>35</sup> University of Pretoria, August 2010. Global University: Report to the Executive by the Task Team to Develop an Internationalisation Strategy.

<sup>36</sup> Planning Steering Committee, January 2011. Consolidated Report: Developing UP's Strategic Plan 2025.

<sup>37</sup> University of Pretoria. 2010. Group 4 Report, November 2010.

<sup>38</sup> See also N Badsha. 2016. Foreword. *Reflections of South African University Leaders 1981 to 2014*. African Minds: Cape Town.

<sup>39</sup> N Cloete et al. (eds). 2002 (and 2006). *Transformation in Higher Education: global pressures and local realities* (Springer); J Muller et al. (eds). 2017. *Castells in Africa: universities and development* (African Minds Publishing); M Castells (ed). 2014. *Reconceptualising Development in the Global Information Age* (Oxford Academic, online accessed 15 March 2023).

<sup>40</sup> World Social Science Report. 2013. *Knowledge Divides. Summary*, June 2013. A joint report of UNESCO and the International Social Science Council (ISSC). The report was launched in South Africa at UP in 2014.



different levels. In addition to geographic and capacity divides at a systemic level, there were also divides linked to the fragmentation of knowledge, the divide between disciplines, academics and society, and academics and policy makers.

Further, it was widely recognised that the ‘wicked problems’ of the 21st century demanded multidimensional approaches to research, innovation and technology transfer. The corollary was that curricula must be locally relevant and, at the same time, aligned to global issues and ideas (i.e., to the best of knowledge available on particular issues or problems — be this in the abstract or directly affecting the daily lives of people).

As captured in the World Social Science report, “The scale, rate, magnitude and significance of changes to the global environment have made it clear that ‘research as usual’ will not suffice to help individuals and groups understand and respond to the multiple, interacting changes that are now occurring.”<sup>41</sup>

It was therefore not a matter of trade-offs between local contextual imperatives and competing or participating in global research efforts, but simultaneously to locate the University’s academic project in *time* and *place*. Also, it was not a matter of privileging some areas of study (e.g., science, maths, engineering and technology), at the expense of others (the social sciences and humanities).

It was obvious, however, that given resource constraints, priorities would need to be set to achieve critical scale, and to avoid resources being stretched too thinly over too many activities.<sup>42</sup>

### Enrolment planning and diversity

The massification of higher education meant that universities all over the world have increasingly become more accessible to a diversity of students. While this has, in general, meant a move from elite to mass to full participation, the complexities linked to ‘access with success’, especially in developing regions, still had to be fully addressed.

In South Africa, the focus shifted to planned enrolment growth as opposed to the massification anticipated or hoped for in the *White Paper 3* of 1997, and the earlier National Commission on Higher Education (1996).

Enormous challenges remained in the provision of quality education from pre-school to Grade 12 and beyond, and unequal access to post-school opportunities constituted a major barrier to addressing the deep social and demographic divides in South Africa. As a consequence, fair and equitable access to university studies remained high on the transformation agenda of the public higher education sector, as did the success of students enrolled.

Table 1.1. Public higher education headcount enrolments by race, 2009 to 2018<sup>43</sup>

	2009	2015	2018
<b>African</b>	547 686 (65,5%)	696 320 (71,5%)	820 619 (76,4%)
<b>Coloured</b>	55 101 (6,6%)	62 186 (6,4%)	65 911 (6,1%)
<b>Indian</b>	53 629 (6,4%)	53 378 (5,5%)	47 865 (4,5%)
<b>White</b>	179 232 (21,4%)	161 739 (16,6%)	140 304 (13,1%)
<b>Total</b>	835 648	973 623	1 074 699

Source: VitalStats, CHE, 2014 and 2016

Over the same period, the headcount enrolments at the University of Pretoria were as follows:

Table 1.2. University of Pretoria headcount enrolments by race, 2009 to 2018

	2009	2015	2018
<b>African</b>	29 316 (52,6%)	28 050 (50,1%)	25 216 (50,0%)
<b>Coloured</b>	965 (1,7%)	1 264 (2,3%)	1 420 (2,8%)
<b>Indian</b>	1 835 (3,3%)	2 735 (4,9%)	2 968 (5,9%)
<b>White</b>	23 618 (42,4%)	23 858 (42,6%)	20 810 (41,3%)
<b>Total</b>	55 734	55 984	50 431

Source: HEMIS data, Department of Institutional Planning

In the development of UP 2025, it was clear that the University would need to keep its focus on becoming a thriving major research university. Whereas access to professional degrees was relatively well-structured by often highly selective admission criteria,

“...it is the BA, BSc and BCom degrees that are the pipeline to most of our postgraduate degree programmes, that are less protected against uncoordinated growth. Whereas the diversity of students that we can attract to these degrees is measurement of our strength, we will not be able to maintain excellence in both undergraduate teaching and research if we attempt to be a university that tries to sit on all possible chairs simultaneously. This challenge is part of diversity management.”<sup>44</sup>

The lower headcount enrolments in 2018 were in large part due to the decrease in distance enrolment in the Faculty of Education (see also section 4 below).

Nationally the overall participation rates<sup>45</sup> of the 20–24 age cohort changed from 17% in 2009 to 22% by 2018. However, wide disparities remained in the participation rates of groups: African students from 13% in 2009 to 19% in 2018; coloured students from 14% to 15%; Indian students from 45% to 46%; and white students from 58% to 55%.<sup>46</sup>

At the first higher education summit, hosted in 2010 by the Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the call was for a re-examination of the collective understanding of the post-apartheid South African university. By 2015, and the second higher education summit, transformation was at the centre of discussions as student protests and the #FeesMustFall movement had spread to several campuses, the consequences of which undeniably heralded a new era for universities in South Africa.<sup>47</sup>

Although the profile of students who gained access to university studies had changed radically, this was not the case with institutional practices, culture and identities — both in terms of the curriculum and the academic success of students, and in terms of institutional transformation more generally.<sup>48</sup> The challenges that many students faced were sharply foregrounded, as were the intersections between different levels of disadvantage — class, race, gender, marginalised youth, disability, persons with HIV/AIDS.



<sup>41</sup> World Social Science Report. 2013. *Knowledge Divides. Summary*, June 2013, p.3.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD) evaluation of South Africa’s innovation policy (2007); and a year later, of the education system (2008).

<sup>43</sup> Council on Higher Education (CHE). 2016 & 2021. *VitalStats. Public Higher Education 2011, 2014, 2016 and 2019*. Pretoria. In both publications it is noted that the ‘unknown’ category is not displayed, but not omitted so rounded off percentages may not always add up to 100%.

<sup>44</sup> University of Pretoria. 2011. Group 4 Report, 15 November 2011, p.11.

<sup>45</sup> Participation rates are calculated, following the UNESCO formula, as a percentage of 20–24 years old in a population or population group enrolled in a national system of higher education.

<sup>46</sup> Council on Higher Education. 2011 & 2021. *VitalStats*, p.3 and p.4.

<sup>47</sup> Department of Higher Education and Training. 2010. Stakeholder Summit on Higher Education Transformation, 22–23 April 2010, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town [https://www.dhet.gov.za/summit/Docs/General/Final%20HE%20Summit%20Information%20Booklet.pdf (accessed 28.03.2023)]; Report on the Second National Higher Education Transformation Summit: International Convention Centre, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, 15–17 October 2015. Published January 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions, November 2008 (informally referred to as the ‘Soudien Report’).

# 4 | Higher education funding — an institutional perspective

Prof Carolina Koornhof, Executive Director, University of Pretoria

The higher education sector in South Africa is funded by three major income streams: government subsidies, tuition and accommodation fees, and third-stream income arising from contract research, consulting, continuing education, donations and grants.

From a quality of income streams perspective, government subsidies are regarded as income of the highest quality, and the University of Pretoria, similar to other universities in South Africa, is reliant on this income stream to fund operational and infrastructure costs in particular. Fees represent the second most valued income stream, but its quality is affected negatively by rising student debt that has escalated alarmingly in the sector since the #FeesMustFall campaign in 2015/2016.

Finally, the quality of third-stream income is generally regarded as having a lower value, given that specific limitations and restrictions are usually placed on such funds. These funds are often earmarked for specific outcomes and purposes, and are rarely available to fund operational and infrastructure expenses and historic student debt.

Figure 1.1 gives a comparison of income streams between 2009 and 2018.

During the period 2009 to 2018, the University of Pretoria positioned itself within this funding landscape with the purpose of optimising its share of government subsidies through improving throughput and student success, growing the student numbers in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) disciplines, which are recognised as scarce skills, as well as growing the postgraduate student numbers, which are funded at higher levels in the subsidy formula. Investments in infrastructure in the faculties of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, Health Sciences and Veterinary Science allowed the University to expand its capacity to accommodate strong growth in student numbers in the STEM disciplines. During the period, the University also grew its overall student numbers and the number of graduates that the University delivered to the market.

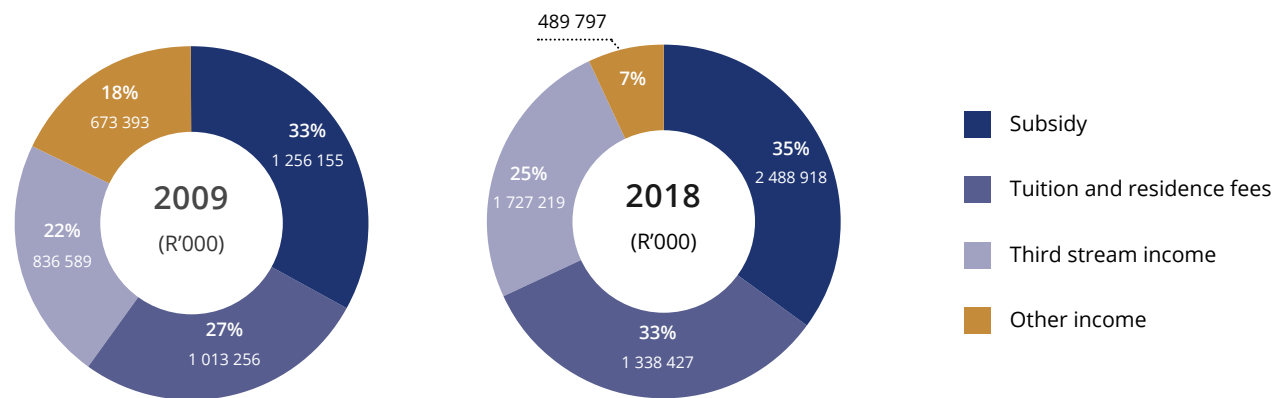


Figure 1.1. Comparison between UP income streams for the years ended 31 December 2009 and 31 December 2018

Table 1.3. UP graduates per major field of study, 2018 and 2009

Major field of study	2009	2018
STEM	30,4%	42,1%
Business	15,5%	22,8%
Humanities	18,8%	20,3%
Education <sup>49</sup>	35,4%	14,9%
<b>Total number of graduates</b>	<b>12 921</b>	<b>13 291</b>

Source: HEMIS files/HEDA

## Infrastructure investment

During the period 2009 to 2018, the University of Pretoria embarked on a number of large infrastructure projects to expand not only capacity in the STEM programmes already mentioned, but also to create platforms for transdisciplinary research, which is a strategic goal in the UP 2025 Plan.

The University received a generous donation from Michael Javett that, with additional UP funding, resulted in the construction of the prestigious Javett Art Centre at the University of Pretoria (the Javett-UP). The Art Centre has become a platform for transdisciplinary research, transformation and promotion of African Art. It is a secure venue to showcase the Mapungubwe Gold Collection, which is under the custodianship of the University of Pretoria Museums. The University also embarked on the building of Future Africa on the Experimental Farm, as a platform to engage with researchers on addressing transdisciplinary issues and problems relevant to Africa. Unfortunately, the completion of both projects significantly exceeded their original budgets when, among others, the construction companies themselves encountered sustainability problems.

## #FeesMustFall

The #FeesMustFall campaign in 2015/2016 had an extremely disruptive effect on the higher education sector as a whole and the University of Pretoria in particular on many fronts, including from a funding perspective. One of the first funding decisions made by the President of South Africa at the time, was that there would be no fee increases in 2016. This decision was funded by government as part of a ring-fenced amount in the government subsidy to support higher education institutions.

A second decision, again by the President of the country, which followed in December 2017, was to move from a partially funded, loan-based NSFAS funding scheme to a fully funded bursary funding scheme. This decision resulted in an exponential growth in NSFAS funding, which was partially funded by a declining block grant to universities and a delay in infrastructure grants. The result was a decline in the government funding per student in real terms over the period.

A related outcome of the Fallist movement was the decision taken by several universities, including the University of Pretoria, to insource service staff who had previously been outsourced. The University insourced a large number of security, maintenance, garden and food services staff on unfavourable financial terms. The financial impact of this decision on the University was profound. For the first time in recent years, the University became reliant on utilising reserves to fund its budgets, and its staff composition became seriously unbalanced with respect to academic, professional and service staff ratios. The total salary cost of the University also escalated in relation to total cost, from 46,8% in 2009 to 57,4% in 2018.

The impact of the insourcing on the financial position of the University was mitigated to some extent when Council approved a Financial Sustainability Plan for the University in June 2018, which was aimed at addressing the issues arising from insourcing, with measurable outcomes by 2025 to correct the imbalances. Financial Sustainability became the number one risk in the Risk Register of the University in 2018.

## Sustainability

In terms of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997), the Council of the University is responsible for the governance, strategy and sustainability of the University. The Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the management of the University and is also the Chief Financial Officer. The approval of the financial statements, budgets including fee increases, risk management and infrastructure investments, requires the approval of the Council of the University. Some of the responsibilities of the Council are delegated to the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive members, who, on a regular basis, report on progress and implementation.

The period from 2009 to 2018 was a particularly tumultuous one for the University of Pretoria in many respects, and

<sup>49</sup> The decline in percentage for the Faculty of Education is due to the decline in distance enrolments following the discontinuation of ACE programmes as a pathway to the BEEd (Honours) programme.



Credit: Lucinda du Toit

specifically, also from a financial perspective. A combination of factors — both within and outside the control of the University — placed additional constraints on University funding from a revenue stream, infrastructure cost and operational cost perspective, and impacted negatively on its long-term sustainability.

Sustainability was one of the key components of Prof De la Rey's inaugural address on 16 April 2010. She mentioned, inter alia, that "Sustainability and sustainable development are terms often used in today's society. Mostly, it is used to refer to the availability of material and tangible resources. ... material resources are critical, especially money. ... To enhance the affordability of our education, one of our challenges is to grow our resource base and to ensure that we utilise our available resources efficiently and effectively. Forging mutually beneficial partnerships with the business community

and public sector organisations will assist us in meeting this goal".<sup>50</sup>

Sustainability is one of the 'navigational markers' in UP 2025 that — along with quality, relevance and diversity — was identified as a 'balancing weight' in monitoring progress and ensuring that appropriate actions are taken in order to achieve the goals and targets set.<sup>51</sup>

Unfortunately, the outcomes of the #FeesMustFall movement acted as a serious stumbling block to achieving this goal. Notwithstanding the many challenges faced during the period, the University began recovering from the negative impact, using its Financial Sustainability Plan to guide not only the improvement of its financial position, but also the rebalancing of the shape and size of staff from a capacity and performance perspective.

## 5 | Transformation

UP 2025 positions transformation as an integral part of the University's development and strategic goals linked to planned enrolment growth, increased research output and relevance, strengthened international networks, impact on the country's socio-economic development, and teaching and learning that develops students and a critical citizenry. These themes are again picked up in Chapter 3 that focuses on the implementation of the University's long-term strategy.

Two perspectives are given:

- Leadership and the person at the helm of the University
- Student protests, and more especially, #UPRising, a reflection by the Editor of *Perdeby* (now *PDBY*), the student newspaper.

In August 2018, the Vice-Chancellor signed the University's Transformation Charter, the outcome of many iterative processes — a milestone that signalled the centrality of transformation in UP's daily practices and institutional culture. This is described in Chapter 3 and in Chapter 5, in the contribution from the Transformation Office.

### Leadership and transformation

*Edwin T Smith, member of the Editorial Board and campus manager, Mamelodi Campus*

### Leadership and change

As the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria from 2009 to 2018, Prof Cheryl de la Rey was, as indicated above, among many things the first black and the first female Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University since its inception in 1908. While other institutions had appointed female and more particularly black female Vice-Chancellors before the University of Pretoria,<sup>52</sup> Prof De la Rey's appointment remains historically significant, not least because in the South African higher education landscape, the University of Pretoria was considered a historically white Afrikaans university. Given this context, it is understandable that much was anticipated and expected of her with regard to transformation. However, transformation, like other historical phenomena, means different things to different people at

different times and it would be unfair and inaccurate to assess Prof De la Rey's tenure and leadership against this narrow criterion.

For some, "transformation of higher education has been public discourse since the enactment of democracy in South Africa".<sup>53</sup> Apart from the obvious demands of transformation on any head of an academic institution in South Africa, Prof De la Rey appeared focused on improving the efficiencies and productivity of the institution, strengthening its knowledge-intensive identity in a networked society, and broadening its outlook through expanded strategic partnerships, more than simply transforming the University through mere numbers and demographics. Despite that, the student and staff profiles changed remarkably well during her tenure. For example, African students constituted 37,0% of the student body in 2009 and 48,2% in 2018, and African female students 54,1% in 2009 and 55,7% in 2018, while African staff constituted 29,9% of the UP workforce in 2009 and 55,8% in 2018.<sup>54</sup>

### The Fallist movement

The transformation of the higher education landscape in South Africa is a process that commenced well before Prof De la Rey's appointment as head of the University of Pretoria. Tethered to higher education policy development and implementation processes, transformation was generally conceptualised around the principles of equity and redress, democratisation, development, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability. Among other views, André Keet writes that "recent demands for 'transformation' come from a wide range of quarters and are articulated in varied forms, but do not appear to be fundamentally different in substance and style from similar calls made at various periods over the past 20 years".<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Installation of Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Cheryl de la Rey, 16 April 2010.

<sup>51</sup> See UP 2025 and subsequent planning frameworks, e.g., the UP Plan for 2013. An Overview of Strategic Priorities, October 2012, p.26.

<sup>52</sup> The University of Natal appointed Prof Brenda Gourley as its Vice-Chancellor in 1994, thereby making her South Africa's first female Vice-Chancellor; the University of Cape Town appointed Prof Mamphela Ramphele as Vice-Chancellor in 1997, thereby making her South Africa's first black female Vice-Chancellor.

<sup>53</sup> Grace Khunou, Chair of the Scientific Committee, University of South Africa's Department of Leadership and Transformation's call for abstracts for the conference, Transforming Scholarship after Covid-19 and in the Context of 4IR, 21–23 November, 2022.

<sup>54</sup> University of Pretoria, Department of Institutional Planning, 2022.

<sup>55</sup> A Keet. 2015. Briefing paper prepared for the second national Higher Education Transformation Summit, 15–17 October 2015, pp.4&5.

He writes that "Reflections on higher education transformation in South Africa generally choose the policy starting-points reflected in the report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE, 1996); the *White Paper* on Higher Education (1997); the Higher Education Act (1997); the National Plan for Higher Education (2001); the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (2008); the Declaration of the Higher Education Summit (2010); the National Development Plan (2012); the terms of reference of the Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in South African Public Universities (2013); and the *White Paper* for Post-school Education and Training (2014)".

Notwithstanding, the Fallist movement and its activities were a significant turning point in how both the leadership at the University of Pretoria and in the South African higher education sector dealt with transformation. Commencing in March 2015 at the University of Cape Town in the #RhodesMustFall student protests, the Fallist movement soon engulfed the entire higher education sector in South Africa, with reverberations as far as the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Unlike Keet who proffers a more sympathetic and supportive notion — and the student's view below, others have viewed the Fallist movement as the 'nadir of transformation' in higher education.<sup>56</sup>

### A turning point

While it is important to understand the spaces Prof De la Rey used to embed her leadership and shift institutional practices, it is the Fallist movement that remains the undeniable marker of the time, at universities in South Africa, and at the University of Pretoria. The movement is only paralleled by the June 1976 student uprising, which had a profound impact on South African struggle history.

As a result of its profound impact, several of Prof De la Rey's contemporaries in the South African university sector produced book-long interrogations of their experiences with and understanding of the Fallist movement, its consequences and aftermath for the higher education sector in the country.<sup>57</sup>

Interpreting the full extent of this turn in higher education is an ongoing process. As can be expected, there continues to be a chorus of different voices and views dancing on the horizon, jostling for dominance and supremacy. In the most recent account, Prof David (D) Benatar (2021) documents a detailed timeline of the Fallist movement from its dramatic inception in 2015 to recent times. However, for Benatar, the "precipitous downward trajectory began, but did not end, with the criminal protests from 2015 to 2017".<sup>58</sup>

Responses to the Fallist movement offer insights and a nuanced understanding of its effect on transformation in institutions of higher education. However, it is important to

### Notable leadership responses

Prof Jonathan Jansen, Vice-Chancellor and Principal at the University of the Free State at the time, met with eleven of his peers, including Prof De la Rey, to conduct in-depth interviews with them on their experiences and views of this phenomenon during their time as heads of South African higher education institutions affected by the Fallist movement phenomenon.<sup>59</sup>

Prof Adam Habib, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) at the time, reported on his experiences with the Fallist movement at his institution as well as in the broader higher education context. Prof Habib's treatise was greeted with dissent and protest. Among these, a number of colleagues at Wits University published an open letter in the *Mail & Guardian* documenting their disagreement with his views.<sup>60</sup> In his endeavour, Prof Habib attempted to provide a deeper understanding of the crisis in higher education and the inappropriateness of the movement's strategies and tactics in addressing the crisis, especially in light of what he considered a one-sided and shallow discourse in the public domain regarding what was happening at universities across the country and in higher education in general and how to fix it.

acknowledge that the protests commenced from historically black universities around the issues of the unaffordable cost of higher education for the historically disadvantaged in the country, but only received greater public attention when these protests progressed to historically white English universities such as the University of Cape Town with the spectacular attack on the Rhodes monument.

The protests reached the University of Pretoria through the #UPRising protests in 2015, and in 2016/2017, the #AfrikaansMustFall wave of student protests at UP and historically white Afrikaans universities. This latter trajectory presents another dimension to the crisis in higher education in South Africa, i.e., the politics, culture and complexities of transformation that Prof De la Rey had to contend with during her leadership of the University of Pretoria.

### Significant identities

Being a woman and black, as noted earlier, were two absolutely significant identities Prof De la Rey brought to the University of Pretoria. However, there were several other ways in which she had to navigate institutional culture and leave her mark in what hitherto had been presented as 'transformation' at UP, and which in multiple ways have left a greater imprint on the institution beyond her tenure. UP in 2009/2010 was arguably very much an institution dominated by men — white, Afrikaans, conservative, church-orientated men, and organised around the institutional practices that, some would argue, defined an efficient bureaucracy.

Notwithstanding, Prof De la Rey's noteworthy contribution in the academic project of the institution, which led to her winning the 2017 businesswoman of the year award,<sup>61</sup> she also embedded her leadership in areas uncharacteristic or at least new in the university landscape. This is significant because for some "what lurks behind the pleasant veneer of the impeccably manicured gardens at UP are markers of belonging and privilege that are somewhat less apparent".<sup>62</sup>

Prof De la Rey was variously invested in the sports culture of the University. She was greatly visible in rugby, soccer, swimming, athletics and what was happening in these sports codes at the institution. Furthermore, she demonstrated a keen interest in the arts, which among other things led to the establishment of the Javett-UP Art Centre that informs, promotes and develops the arts enterprise in South Africa and on the continent. Prof De la Rey promoted transdisciplinarity in the academy, which, among other things, resulted in the creation of Future Africa as a multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary research platform focused on the African continent. She was also a founding member of the

Australia–Africa University Network (AAUN), which sought to foster partnerships between universities across the country and continent with Australian universities to build research capacity and projects to the benefit of both continents. This particular endeavour constitutes a different postulation of the south-south relations in the higher education sphere, which is normally characterised by north-south relationships.

### Doing things differently

Consequently, Prof De la Rey did things differently during her time at the University of Pretoria. Not only did she have an open-door policy to the Student Representative Council (SRC), for some she also affected the way a Vice-Chancellor looked, dressed, and behaved, which was refreshing and inspiring in many ways. In this regard, she also launched a fitness walking trail on the Hatfield Campus to promote healthy lifestyles and living in the university community. She did all this while putting out raging fires all over the institution and the higher education landscape as a result of the Fallist movement, which, some may argue, greatly affected her relationship with a section of staff and students at UP.

For many observers, the behaviour and conduct of some of the students and workers during this time left much to be desired and tested and strained many relationships, regardless of the acknowledged legitimacy of their concerns and quests.

The swift and decisive locking down of the campuses resulted, among other things, in limiting the physical damage to the University's infrastructure. This was seen by some as 'militarising the university', and detracted from what was an excellent leadership tenure. With hindsight, many now credit her actions with saving the institution from the devastation

<sup>56</sup> D Benatar. 2021. The fall of the University of Cape Town: Africa's leading university in decline, *Politicsweb*, pp.415–421.

<sup>57</sup> See J Jansen. 2017. *As by fire: The end of the South African university*, Tafelberg, Cape Town; and A Habib. 2019. *Rebels and Rage: Reflecting on #Feesmustfall* (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg).

<sup>58</sup> D Benatar. 2021, p.1.

<sup>59</sup> J Jansen. 2017, p.x.

<sup>60</sup> S Ally et al. 2019. An open letter to the readers of Adam Habib's 'Rebels and Rage', *Mail & Guardian*, 1 April 2019. <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-04-01-an-open-letter-to-the-readers-of-adam-habibs-rebels-and-rage/> Accessed: 22 July 2022.

<sup>61</sup> Anon, UP Vice-Chancellor is Businesswoman of the Year winner for Education, 11 September 2017. [https://www.up.ac.za/business-management/news/post\\_2556244-up-vice-chancellor-is-businesswoman-of-the-year-winner-for-education#:~:text=University%20of%20Pretoria%20\(UP\)%20Vice,cereemony%20in%20Sandton%20last%20week.](https://www.up.ac.za/business-management/news/post_2556244-up-vice-chancellor-is-businesswoman-of-the-year-winner-for-education#:~:text=University%20of%20Pretoria%20(UP)%20Vice,cereemony%20in%20Sandton%20last%20week.) Accessed: 22 July 2022.

<sup>62</sup> S O'Connell. 2022. UP can stake its place as a benchmark space of higher learning in, and of, Africa. In M Crewe (ed.), *Institutional Curiosity*, ESI Press, Pretoria, p.13.

the Fallist movement and its various iterations caused the higher education landscape across the country. Reports from the Department of Higher Education and Training indicate the total damage to institutions across the country as a result of the Fallist movement protest actions amounted to almost R800 million rands.<sup>63</sup>

Notwithstanding UP's long history of transformation from its inception as an English institution in 1908 to its 'Afrikaanswording'<sup>64</sup> when "in 1932, the University Council declared that Afrikaans should be the only medium of instruction",<sup>65</sup> to the University being a dual medium — Afrikaans and English — university in the 1990s, and then an English and Afrikaans university in the 2000s, to the current language of instruction disposition that continues to be reviewed as keeping up with the changing and evolving sensibilities of the state, UP has always been a 'volksuniversiteit'.<sup>66</sup> Although this took on a different form from 1994, UP has remained an engaged university in service of society and the 'public good'<sup>67</sup>. This is perhaps the fate of a public university, and its leaders will ultimately be judged on how best they served and executed this role.

### Universities and leadership

Universities claim a higher calling as generators of new knowledge to move society forward. In South Africa, this implies being responsive to local contexts and needs. With the legacy of colonialism and apartheid being a living reality in the racial disparities that continue to plague South Africa, the challenge of transforming institutions to reflect the best of society continues unabated. What often gets lost in the quest of being all things to all people, is the need to be something worthwhile to the country and the higher education sector. Often, South African higher education institutions seem to pursue a cookie-cutter approach to both innovation and transformation in the sector. From their vision and mission statements to their strategic plans, our institutions are often indistinguishable from one another.

In some sense this may be the reality given that they all serve the same country and people that have to contend with the same opportunities and challenges. However, one cannot deny the yearning for an institutional leader who not only looks different but is actually different and brings that difference to bear on the institution they lead. This might be

too tall an order for any vice-chancellor anywhere. But the University of Pretoria needed such a leader if it was to make any advances on the promise it holds to future generations of students and staff at the institution. By all accounts, Prof Cheryl de la Rey presented the University of Pretoria such an opportunity during her tenure.

### Perdeby — students' voice

Unique perspectives, edgy content, and a reflection of student life has been the maxim of the *Perdeby* newspaper since its first edition in 1939. The mandate is to inform and entertain but what has always set the newspaper apart from mainstream media is the focus on content that matters to students.

Although the publication serves as a development platform for student journalists, its readers have always held these students to the same high standards as they would seasoned professionals. In 2015 and 2016, *Perdeby* journalists stepped up to the challenge by reporting on events that would dramatically impact and change universities across South Africa. It could be argued that the content produced during

this period was on par with that of mainstream publications, and in some instances better, because of the access student journalists had to the protests, paired with the unique angles they took in telling students' stories.

Over the years, *Perdeby* has proved itself to be a journalistic watchdog on campus through being the voice of Tuks students.

As the images that conclude this chapter show, and the text by the then Editor, Dr Michal-Maré Linden, being at the coalface of the #UPRising protests generated unique vantage points from which to view this period in the history of the University of Pretoria.

*Carel Willemse, Editor-in-Chief of Perdeby, now PDBY*

### #UPRising — a student journalist's view

*Dr Michal-Maré Linden*

On Friday, 16 October 2015, *Perdeby* (now recognised as *PDBY*) held their annual awards evening. Prizes were handed out for 'Article of the year', 'Best photo' and 'Section of the year'. While we celebrated late into the night, none of us were aware that a week later we would be nursing sunburn, exhaustion, and the effects of pepper spray and rubber bullets. We were also ignorant that the best was yet to come.

The 2015 #FeesMustFall protests at the University of Pretoria, which fell under the name #UPRising, lasted only a week. It was the most significant news week *Perdeby* had seen in years. When I started my tenure as Editor in September 2014, I envisioned a newspaper that broke away from student fluff about drinking, drugs, and bars. It may have seemed terribly boring, but I had, after all, grown up reading *Time*, and not *Seventeen*.

No one pushed back too hard on this vision. Our staff consisted largely of students born between 1993 and 1995, democracy babies, and they had an awareness about them that was palpable. While it meant there were sometimes heated political arguments in the layout room, it also meant that we understood that journalists had a great responsibility — we were just waiting for our moment.

When the protests broke on campus, the transformation happened almost instantly: sports journalists became hardened newshounds, entertainment writers became professional social media managers, and our copy editors traded pen for phone as they live-streamed the action while dodging rocks. We worked around the clock, sometimes in



<sup>63</sup> L Dentlinger, #FeesMustFall damage costs soar to nearly R800m, *Eyewitness News*, 8 August 2018.

<sup>64</sup> *Afrikaanswording* meaning 'becoming Afrikaans'.

<sup>65</sup> S O'Connell. 2022, p.12.

<sup>66</sup> 'Volksuniversiteit' meaning a university of the nation or state. FA Mouton. 2004. FJ du Toit Spies, *Afrikaner Nationalism and Volksgeskiedenis at the University of Pretoria*, *South African Historical Journal*, 51(1), p.95.

<sup>67</sup> ET Smith. 2021. Education and the public good: Foregrounding education in history, *Yesterday & Today*, 26, December 2021, p.47.

physical danger, to produce news content not seen in any mainstream media, most especially because our content focused on students and their plight.

While certain well-known publications exclaimed that “security guards fled from students”<sup>68</sup> and protesters “went on a rampage”<sup>69</sup>, our journalists were constantly on the ground to set the record straight: that the protests were calm and intelligent, that they had damaged no infrastructure, and that their cause was inspired by justice and empathy for the poor. *Perdeby* provided a direct line to student protesters that no other publication had, and the more time we spent with the protesters, the more our compassion grew. We handed out water as they stood in the hot sun and ensured that identities would not be compromised if they spoke to us. We were no longer ‘student journalists’, but ‘students’ and ‘journalists’.

While some may criticise our actions, I think that the protests made us realise what the epitome of being a journalist is. A journalist is motivated to help, to showcase injustices and

community issues. They use their agency and creativity to give a voice to the voiceless. On 23 October 2015, when President Zuma announced a moratorium on fees for 2016, we too felt a wave of success. I believe, even if it is in some small part, our reportage helped recognise the humanity of students, and remember their history-making efforts forever.

This all seems utopic, and 2015’s protests were in comparison to what followed. UP saw the #AfrikaansMustFall and #FeesMustFallReloaded protests in February and August to October of 2016, respectively. These protests were violent and polarising, resulting in injury, damage to property, the securitisation of campuses, and a stronger pushback to the movements’ core messages. Even still, *Perdeby* journalists applied the skills learned in 2015 — professionalism and discretion — to focus on the core issues, instead of getting swept up in the drama of movements that were no longer student-led and underlain with ulterior motives and political agendas.

Michal-Maré Linden, Editor of *Perdeby* in 2015 and 2016, completed her master’s degree in 2017. Her thesis, supervised by Prof Corinne Sandwith in the University’s Department of English, is titled “Narrating the 2015 ‘FeesMustFall’ movement: explanations, contestations, and forms of meaning-making in the public sphere”.



Credit: Perdeby



CHAPTER 1 | Context

Credit: Perdeby

l to r: Mosibudi Rassie Rasethaba (SRC President), Thabo Shingange (SRC Deputy Secretary), Michael Bongani Reinders (SRC Residence), Amla Monageng (student activist), Huvasan Reddy (*Perdeby* journalist)

<sup>68</sup> eNCA. 2015. 'Security runs for cover as Tuks students protest'. 21 October. [Online] Available at <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/security-runs-cover-students-protest> [Accessed 20 March 2023].

<sup>69</sup> T Makhetha and R Moatshe. 2015. 'Fees fight hits city'. *Pretoria News*, 22 October, p.1.