

RHODES: WHO WE ARE, WHERE WE ARE TODAY AND WHERE WE WANT TO BE IN 2020

Introduction

Another year is underway and, new or old, students can be confident about the quality of the educational and social experience that they will encounter during their stay at Rhodes, given our deserved national and international reputation for academic scholarship and quality.

Preserving and further enhancing this reputation are not matters that we are complacent about or leave to chance. Myriad challenges face all universities, including Rhodes. A clear understanding of the social purposes and key roles of a university, effective institutional planning, and an open, participatory and critical culture are necessary for identifying and addressing challenges, building on strengths, exploiting available opportunities, overcoming weaknesses and ensuring dynamic and sustainable institutional development. We believe it is important to constantly openly and critically think and engage about our activities, celebrate what we do well and have the courage to improve where necessary and change what needs to change.

Why there is a Rhodes

When new students arrive at Rhodes, I tell them why there is a Rhodes University and what we exist to do. I say that we serve three key purposes.

The first is to *produce knowledge*, so that we can advance understanding of our natural and social worlds and enrich our accumulated scientific and cultural heritage.

This means that we “test the inherited knowledge of earlier generations”, we dismantle the mumbo jumbo that masquerades for knowledge, we “reinvigorate” knowledge and we share our findings with others. We undertake research into the most arcane and abstract issues and the “most theoretical and intractable uncertainties of knowledge”. At the same time we also strive to apply our discoveries for the benefit of humankind. We “operate on both the short and the long horizon”. On the one hand, we grapple with urgent and “contemporary problems” and seek solutions to these. On the other hand, we “forage” into issues and undertake enquiries “that may not appear immediately relevant to others, but have the proven potential to yield great future benefit”.

As a university our second purpose is to *disseminate knowledge* and to cultivate minds. Our goal is to ensure that our students can think imaginatively, “effectively and critically”; that they “achieve depth in some field of knowledge”; that they can critique and construct alternatives, that they can communicate cogently, orally and in writing, and that they have a “critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves”. At the same time, we also seek that our students should have “a broad knowledge of other cultures and other times”; should be “able to make decisions based on reference to the wider world and to

the historical forces that have shaped it”, and that they should have “some understanding of and experience in thinking systematically about moral and ethical problems”.

Our final purpose as a university is to undertake *community engagement*. On the one hand this involves our students’ voluntary participation in community projects undertaken through our Community Engagement office. On the other hand, it involves service-learning, in which through academic courses our students and academics take part “in activities where both the community” and we benefit, “and where the goals are to provide a *service* to the community and, equally, to enhance our *learning* through rendering this service”.

I say to students that they come to Rhodes University to embark on a voyage centred on the pursuit, making and sharing of knowledge; which is why we refer to Rhodes as indawo yolwazi - a place of knowledge.

By being at Rhodes University, students commit themselves to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, as vital means to combatting myths, ignorance and prejudice, and to self-betterment and the betterment of humankind.

I also remind them that Rhodes is guided by certain **values**:

- The South African *Constitution* and *Bill of Rights*:
 - ✓ Set out the character of the society that is envisaged
 - ✓ Proclaim the values of ‘human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms,’ and ‘non-racialism and non-sexism.’
 - ✓ State that no institution or individual ‘may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.’
 - ✓ Enjoin us to ‘respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights.’
- The 1997 *White Paper* on higher education expresses the core principles that our universities must embody: equity and redress, democratisation, development, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy (and) public accountability.

Our purposes as a university must necessarily intersect and effectively engage with the economic and social challenges of the local, national, African and global contexts - the imperative of economic growth and development; the ability to compete globally; job creation and the reduction of poverty; the effective delivery of social services; the threat of HIV/AIDS; and also the imperatives of equity and redress; social justice; the building of a substantive democracy, including a culture of human rights and a vibrant civil society; and a culture of vigorous and critical intellectual public discourse.

This requires Rhodes to be a powerhouse of knowledge production and knowledge dissemination, and of the formation of new generations of thinkers and actors. All those

associated with Rhodes commit themselves to Rhodes being indawo yolwazi - a place of knowledge.

Key Developments

Rhodes needs to have carefully considered and formulated ideas on its academic and overall institutional trajectory and development if it is not to be simply shaped by historical patterns and contemporary currents and pressure, and is to proactively and consciously shape its future.

We need to make conscious choices and decisions with respect to knowledge production, teaching-learning and community engagement. These choices include the balance between undergraduate and postgraduate provision, the breadth of qualifications and programmes, the nature of programmes (the mix between general formative, vocational, professional, etc.), the mode of provision (contact, distance, e-learning) and the like. Regarding knowledge production, there are choices on different kinds of scholarship (discovery, integration, etc.) and the nature of research (fundamental, applied, strategic, developmental). Community engagement involves issues such as relations with different kinds of communities (mining, manufacturing, agriculture, commerce, government, non-governmental organisations, social movements), which operate in different spaces (national, provincial, regional, local), and have different requirements (research, teaching).

Rhodes is currently in the process of producing an **Institutional Development Plan** (IDP) which will

- Collate, consolidate and expresses our choices, decisions and goals and strategies with respect to academic programmes, enrolments, staffing, infrastructure and finances over the next decade (two five-year terms).
- Be a *compass* (rather than a cast-in-stone invariant blueprint) that guides developments, prioritisation, decision-making and implementation at Rhodes while leaving room for pursuing new imperatives and exploiting possible new opportunities.
- Ensure that there is an alignment between enrolment planning, academic planning, staffing, infrastructure planning and financial planning, and that planning occurs on a longer-term horizon.
- Will ensure that Rhodes is financially sustainable taking into account its enrolments, academic programmes and operations, and its staffing and infrastructure requirements.
- Will help us to effectively address and pursue new social and educational imperatives, goals and strategies.

Informed by the IDP, a **Campus Development Plan** will be also finalised as a guide to the considered overall physical development and maintenance of the Rhodes University campus. A Green Fund has been created to support the University to institute environmentally-friendly short-, medium- and long-term measures, and initiatives and activities that ensure that Rhodes becomes a greener campus.

Enrolment Plans

Our target for 2012 was 7 576 students - 5 329 undergraduate students and 2 204 postgraduate students. We were, however, down 183 students: we had 82 less undergraduate students, 97 less postgraduate students, and 4 less occasional students than was our target. There are financial implications when we have fewer students than we budgeted for. We were within the 2% leeway that the Department of Higher Education & Training permits regarding enrolment figures and won't lose any subsidy.

We asked the Registrar to pay careful attention to the 2013 enrolments so that we can try and meet our targets: a total enrolment of 7645 with 5 329 undergraduates, 2 273 postgraduates. We adjusted these target figures to take more undergraduates to get to the target total of 7 645. This meant a new first year intake target in 2013 of 1 600 students instead of the 2012 intake of 1 500.

Currently, our enrolment is as follows: 7 267 registered students; 3 589 returning undergraduates, and 1 614 new first year students to give a total of 5 203 undergraduates (a little short of our target, but there may still be Education students and Extended DP second semester registrations). There are 2 064 postgraduate registered, which means we are 209 short, but there are still some 300 students that are still to register.

In so far as a new Enrolment Plan for 2014-2019 is concerned, for the first time we are being requested to plan for a six-year period instead of the usual three years. We welcome this as three years is too short a planning period. However, it also poses interesting challenges with respect to academic, infrastructure, staff and financial planning.

We have submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training a first draft enrolment plan for the six-year period, 2014-2019. The key enrolment targets of the plan are:

Students	Projected target 2013	Proposed target 2019	Average annual increase
First-time entering undergraduates	1500	1672	1.3%
Total undergraduate	5329	5926	1.3%
Postgraduate to Masters level	987	1158	4.0%
Masters	912	1058	4.2%
Doctors	374	561	4.9%
Total postgraduate	2273	2777	4.3%
Occasional students	43	45	0.0%
Total Enrolment	7645	8748	2.2%

The projected enrolment growth between 2013 and 2019 is from 70% undergraduate to 68%; and from 30% to 32% postgraduate.

The projected enrolments necessarily have implications for academic infrastructure (academic buildings, lecture, seminar and tutorial venues and laboratories), for

undergraduate and postgraduate residences and the like which is being looked at and will be the object of discussion with the DHET.

Academic issues

Our Enrolment Plan expresses our intention of becoming a more postgraduate university and overall we seek to enhance further our contribution to knowledge production through research and scholarship. We are well-positioned for such a trajectory. We

- Take research seriously and strive to provide our academics with effective support;
- Have the third best research output per capita staff member;
- Have the second highest percentage of staff with PhDs (56%),
- Have very good postgraduate graduation rates and the best rates at the PhD level.

At the recent graduation ceremonies

- We graduated 948 students or 41% with postgraduate degrees
- We celebrated a new University record of 63 PhD's – a fabulous achievement for the smallest university in the country
- Our Science Faculty produced 35 PhD graduates, 83 Masters graduates, 132 honours graduates.

Despite being the smallest university in South Africa, and comprising only 0.8% of South Africa's university students and 1.9% of all full-time academic staff, we possess 7% (10) of all the prestigious research chairs that are available to universities as part of the South African Research Chairs initiative (SARChI). The programme was established in 2006 to strengthen scientific research leadership and capacity in South African universities. It aims to create a critical mass of world-class scholars who will train future generations of scholars and graduates to support a South African knowledge-based economy.

SARChI chairs are tenable for five years and renewable for two further five-year periods, giving a total life span of fifteen years. Eligibility for renewal is based on performance. The funding per chair is R2.5 million per annum, and is intended to cover salaries, postdoctoral fellowships, postgraduate student bursaries, research operating costs, and equipment necessary for the work the Chair.

A key criterion for the award of a SARChI chair is that the host university must provide a scholarly environment in which the chair and scholarship can flourish – without doubt Rhodes is such an environment. Our SARChI chairs are in:

- Medicinal Chemistry and Nanotechnology (Prof Tebello Nyokong)
- Marine Ecosystems (Prof Christopher McQuaid)
- Mathematics Education (Prof Marc Schafer)
- Numeracy (Prof Mellony Graven)
- Radio Astronomy (Prof Oleg Smirnov)
- Intellectualisation of African Languages, Multilingualism and Education (Prof Russell Kaschula)
- Insects in Sustainable Agricultural Ecosystems
- Interdisciplinary Science in Land and Natural Resource Use for Sustainable Livelihoods (Prof Charlie Shackleton)

- Marine Natural Products Research, and
- 'Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction: Human and Social Dynamics.'

We will announce appointments to the latter three chairs in due course. The University will continue to pursue further chairs in proven areas of academic excellence.

As part of our future institutional trajectory, during this year we will continue to give special attention to identifying potential new postgraduate and research niche areas and programmes, and developing the appropriate institutional arrangements to effectively support larger numbers of Honours, Masters and Doctoral students, as well further enhance their academic and social experiences.

New Masters programmes were started recently in Creative Writing, Social Policy, Bioinformatics and Applied Computer Science, as well as a new Honours specialisation in Health Journalism in partnership with Discovery Health. A number of new Masters programmes will be introduced in due course in Water, Forensics Science and bilingual education.

On the basis of our breadth and depth in water education and research, and in partnership with NMMU and Fort Hare we hope to become a key institutional hub on the African continent in this field and bid for a UNESCO facility in this area.

We also seek to build a cooperative projects in promotion of isiXhosa as a language in higher education initiative with Fort Hare, Walter Sisulu and other Eastern and Western Cape universities.

In recent years, we have introduced four new postgraduate and research focus areas in the Humanities funded by the Mellon Foundation. Alongside are three new Humanities initiatives. One is the Allan Gray Centre for Leadership Ethics, which will be located in the University's outstanding Philosophy department. Made possible by a five-year, R12.5 million renewable grant from the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation, the Centre will seek to imaginatively and critically investigate what precisely is meant by leadership and specifically leadership with ethics, and how to promote such leadership in diverse contexts and circumstances, with the ultimate intent of promoting such leadership. We propose to begin by promoting genuine leadership with ethics among university students in the first instance and then among other specific constituencies as the Centre expands.

A second Humanities initiative is UHURU – a new *Unit for the Humanities at Rhodes University* – funded to the tune of \$ 900 000 over four years by the Mellon Foundation. UHURU seeks to expand this team approach and to establish research themes and foci that engage with critical historical and contemporary issues in the arts, social sciences and humanities. It also seeks to create an intellectual space for dedicated scholars - a mix of internal staff and visiting scholars - to undertake research on a relatively full-time basis. The aim is to provide an institutional 'home' for groups of leading scholars to realize their scholarly potential; help deepen a vibrant and dynamic intellectual culture at Rhodes; increase scholarly outputs in the Humanities at Rhodes, and help to re-establish and re-invigorate humanities research in South Africa in a way that impacts on state, civil society

and society more generally. UHURU will be complemented with an additional Mellon grant of \$100 000 for a visiting writers and scholars programme.

Finally, following a grant from Atlantic Philanthropy we look forward to the start-up for a project based in the History department on *Addressing Legacies of the Apartheid Wars*.

There have also been important developments in the Centre of Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL). CHERTL's new PhD programme in Higher Education Studies, with a special focus on Learning and Teaching, now enrolls over 30 students, with more seeking admission.

CHERTL has also been awarded 1 million euros by the Dutch agency Nuffic to conduct a national project on enhancing postgraduate supervision. The funds will be used to develop a course on supervision and to roll this out at South African universities, particularly those with low PhD graduation rates. The project brings together partners Rhodes, Stellenbosch, UCT and Fort Hare - and a consortium from the Netherlands involving the Vrije University of Amsterdam, the African Studies Centre in Leiden and the Institute for Social Studies of the Erasmus University in Rotterdam.

Rhodes and CHERTL are also mobilising support for a R40 million national programme that will see us partnering with the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to help build the teaching and learning capabilities of academics and universities in South Africa. The programme is intended to enhance the development of academic staff as professional educators in South African universities. CHERTL supports the Rhodes academic staff in providing first class teaching and learning experiences for students of all levels, and is thus well placed to assist in this project.

Already, CHERTL has offered short courses at other universities in order to enhance the teaching capabilities of academics. In addition, its Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education has been offered over two years in 'block' format to staff from other universities, enabling them to complete the course at Rhodes.

To give impetus to our plans and support strategic new academic initiatives the University's Council and Board of Governors agreed to create the Sandiswa *Imbewu* ('We are growing/multiplying our seeds') Fund. R 12.5 million was pledged for the period 2010-2014 as seed funding for new initiatives. The Fund is to help consolidate and enhance current areas of academic excellence at Rhodes; facilitate ventures into new academic and research areas, especially at the postgraduate level; support Rhodes to exploit new opportunities that can develop research and knowledge production, and further enhance the quality of graduates produced. Various initiatives have been supported including new postgraduate and research focus areas and programmes.

Late last month the Mellon Foundation approved two new awards to Rhodes University. The first is a grant of \$ 290 000 for the *Establishment of the Archives of the University, alongside a Research Project on the History of Rhodes University*. The project will be led by Distinguished Prof Paul Maylam. The second project is for support of *An Institutional and*

Postgraduate Research Agenda on Equity and Institutional Culture Related Matters at Rhodes University. The funding for this is \$99,375.

We are also giving attention to how and what we may contribute to improving schooling in the Eastern Cape, especially through our teacher education programmes. We are in discussion with the Department of Higher Education & Training in this regard, and there could be an important announcement in due course. We continue to also explore how we may continue to cultivate and support local and regional students with talent and facilitate their entry to Rhodes

Our key challenges are:

- Maintaining our status of possessing the best undergraduate pass rates and graduations rates among South African universities
- Ensuring that we provide effective support to all our students, and especially black South African students who are from historically disadvantaged public schools
- The need to give attention to the appropriate balance between face-to-face teaching-learning and other forms of teaching-learning that harness the potential of new information and communication technologies
- Identifying potential new postgraduate and research niche areas and programmes, and ensuring that there is effective planning, fund-raising and implementation
- Providing further support to the Humanities, Law and Commerce faculties to enable them to increase their contributions to postgraduate and research outputs
- Developing appropriate institutional arrangements to enhance the quantity, the quality, the academic and social experience and the equity profile of our postgraduates, and especially South African postgraduates
- Continuing to pursue further chairs in proven or potential new areas of academic excellence.

Staff

Key to the quality of our institutional activities and academic programmes are committed staff. In this regard, we will give attention to:

- Improving teacher: student ratios overall and in specific areas
- Improving the equity profile of academic and senior support staff
- Continuing to build the next generation of academics, and especially black and women academics
- Effectively supporting new and emerging scholars academics
- Finalising, after consultation with staff unions, a remuneration policy
- Systematically moving to remunerate all staff on the 50th percentile.

Key challenges here include:

- ✓ Improving the equity profile of academic and senior and middle-level support staff
- ✓ Continuing to build the next generation of academics, especially black and women academics
- ✓ Improving teacher: student ratios overall and in specific areas
- ✓ Reconsidering academic staff norms in the context of a trajectory of becoming more postgraduate and research-oriented

- ✓ Effectively supporting new academics
- ✓ Effectively supporting new staff recruits in settling into Rhodes and in Grahamstown
- ✓ Systematically moving to remunerate all staff on the 50th percentile
- ✓ Finalising a remuneration policy.

Infrastructure plans

Adequate infrastructure in the form of buildings, facilities, equipment and the like are important to our academic and support-staff operations. We have to give continuous attention to

- The available infrastructure to support academic programmes
- The available infrastructure for student accommodation and sports/cultural activities
- The available infrastructure for housing for academics
- The available infrastructure for administrative and other support services
- The backlogs with respect to infrastructure for academic programmes, student accommodation, sports/cultural activities, housing for academics and administrative and other support services
- The implications of future enrolments and academic programmes for different kinds of infrastructure
- The capability and capacity of Makana Municipality to provide the necessary services to support larger enrolments and new infrastructure.

Since 2007 we have

- Built a spectacular new library, completely renovated the existing library and released academic space through the incorporation of some branch libraries into the main library – a cost of R75 million
- Built five new residences – cost of some R100 million
- Built a new environmental education building – cost of R12 million
- Built a new Desmond Tutu dining hall
- Added additional ICT bandwidth and speed with considerable future savings

Currently, a new building for teacher education is being completed at a cost of some R17 million.

During the next 30 months the following will occur on the infrastructure front:

	DHET Allocation	Rhodes Funding	Total Cost	Rhodes Funding Obligation	Rhodes Portion of National
	R'000	R'000	R'000	%	%
Disability	2,800	200	3,000	6.7%	2.3%
Health Sciences	19,845	2,205	22,050	10.0%	4.5%
Life Sciences	86,248	14,694	100,942	14.6%	15.8%
Well Founded Labs	2,010	220	2,230	9.9%	2.7%
Student Housing	30,946	5,883	36,829	16.0%	12.9%
African Languages	25,777	5,531	31,308	17.7%	8.3%
Project Management	2,000	-	2,000	0.0%	3.6%
Total	169,626	28,733	198,359	14.5%	2.9%

A new postgraduate residence will replace the current Oakdene House; it will have 40 postgraduate student rooms and cost R18.9m.

We will also

- Continue to refurbish our residences, and
- Undertake a comprehensive audit of the state of all our buildings in order to develop a comprehensive maintenance plan.

We continue to aspire to build a new indoor sports centre or to considerably expand the current one, given the increased student numbers and the burgeoning of sport at Rhodes.

New infrastructure development at Rhodes will be guided by a long-term Campus Development Plan, so that we remain a beautiful campus and also incorporate environmental considerations in our planning.

Financial plan

We have three sources of funds:

- State subsidy - including teaching input funds, teaching outputs funds, research (postgraduate outputs and publication) related funds, institutional size funds, student composition funds, teaching development grants, research development grants, academic development funds, infrastructure and efficiency funds
- Student tuition fee income
- Third stream income – including short courses, research contracts, endowments and gifts.

We have to give careful attention to the current and possible future mix of sources of funding and the income from these three sources as part of ensuring that have the finances to

- Maintain current academic programmes
- Initiate new academic (teaching and research) programmes
- Remunerate staff appropriately
- Ensure infrastructure backlogs are addressed and to support additional infrastructure related to growth and development
- The effective and efficient use of available finances to address the social purposes of the University, implement agreed upon strategies and realise defined goals

As far as finances are concerned we

- Are committed to a zero-deficit budget
- Annually balance income and expenditure
- Annually generate modest surpluses that are allocated to an Infrastructure and Strategic Developments Fund
- Have instituted a process to plan on a three-year basis and generate three-year budgets.

National issues

Central Applications Office

Higher Education South Africa, which is the voice of our 23 universities, in principle supports the establishment of a Central Applications System (CAS) for higher education in South Africa. We think that there can be various benefits.

We are however adamant on a number of issues, which we have brought home to the Minister.

- First, the higher education sector must have ownership of the CAS and its processes (as is the case with the KwaZulu-Natal office). This means it should be established and should function in a way that all 23 universities can willingly participate in these processes.
- Second, the CAS cannot be established or operated unilaterally by the DHET.
- Third, the CAS may not encroach on universities' admission criteria or "place" students despite their own choices.
- Fourth, the CAS must be able to sustain itself financially, through the single application fee or/and financial support from the DHET.
- Finally, in establishing the CAS, realistic timeframes must be set, so as not to create confusion and unrealistic expectations amongst prospective students. We strongly believe that a series of pilot projects are necessary before the CAS goes operational at a national level. We are especially concerned with media reports that this system will begin in 2014.