

### COUNCIL UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY OF COUNCIL

A summary of the first Council meeting for this year that took place on Thursday, 7 April 2022 follows below.

The Chairperson of Council, Mr Isaac Shongwe, welcomed three new members – Prof. Garth Stevens, Prof. Nosipho Moloto, Mr Bernhard Agulhas (external), and introduced the new Chief Financial Officer, Ms Maureen Manyama.

Council **noted** the:

- Unaudited Preliminary Results for the Financial Year ended 31 December 2021,
- Council Controlled Results for the Financial Year ended 31 December 2021,
- Preliminary Unaudited Capital Expenditure Report as at December 2021,
- Wits Entities' Financial Results for the period ended 31 December 2021,
- Report on Property Development,
- University's Institutional Scorecard for 2022,
- Enrolment Targets as at 29 March 2022, and the
- Wits Strategic Plan for Innovation (2022-2026).

After extensive deliberation, Council **approved** the following:

- A new Academic Collections Policy to ensure that Wits' special artefacts, sample collections, and the like, are managed under a controlled governance structure that complies with all legal and other requirements,
- The proposal to change the Centre of Exercise Science and Sports Medicine from a Centre to an Academic Department,
- The creation of a Wits satellite facility on the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital's premises on land space allocated by the Hospital, subject to the identified risks being addressed through the appropriate contract/s,
- The 2022 tuition fee increases (4%) and residence fee increases (5.75%) (excluding postgraduate entities), which are lower than the recommendations made by the Department of Higher Education and Training, and
- **Contracts:**
  - o The extension of the Elsevier Scholarly Publications' contract for six years,
  - o The Wits Junction Residences (Pty) Ltd Letter of Support and Subordination Agreement, and
  - o An extension of the Makro contract for one more year.

### Contracts extending more than five years

At its last meeting, Council requested a presentation on ICT contracts exceeding five years, which was delivered. The reasons for the proposed extension of these contracts, the governance pertaining to these contracts, and the responsibility of Council, management, and other structures, with regards to the extension of contracts was discussed.

### 2033 Strategic Plan

The Wits 2033 Strategic Framework was approved at the end of 2021 and a team will be appointed to develop an implementation plan to serve before Council in November this year, and to be enacted from 2023.

### **Vaccination Update**

Mr Scott Smalley presented an update on the implementation of the University's Mandatory Vaccination Policy. He mentioned that more than 90% of staff and students had uploaded and verified their vaccination status, and that most applications for Reasonable Accommodation had been processed. Council members congratulated the University community on this achievement and the VC thanked all those who engaged in developing policy and implementing it.

Mr Smalley also mentioned Wits' vaccination and testing site on campus, which was remarkably successful. He spoke about access to campus, screening tool requirements, venue management in line with legislation and regulations, communications and advocacy programmes, and the establishment of the Wits Vaccination Help Desk.

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

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Zeblon Vilakazi reported on the commencement of the 2022 academic year, Welcome Day, the ground-breaking holistic Gateway to Success programme, a second-year experience programme, an inaugural postgraduate welcome event, and the enrolment process. Wits received approximately 80 000 applications for 5 500 first-year spaces this year. Almost 500 students were assisted to register through R16 million from the Wits Hardship Fund. An overview of the 2022 blended [learning and teaching plan](#) for 2022 was provided. He added that the Research Office had collected 2 350 research units for the 2021 academic year, that many Witsies had been re-rated by the National Research Foundation, and that the Wits executive had two A-rated scientists in its midst.

The VC indicated that the Centenary Campaign is progressing well, despite the challenging fundraising environment, and highlighted recent events including the opening of the Chris Seabrooke Music Hall, almost R50 million for a Chair in Innovation, a Vice-Chancellor's webinar and visits by high profile alumni. New partnerships with the University of Edinburgh, University College London and the CIVIS Alliance are flourishing. Council members applauded the executive on proactively managing stakeholders.

He added that Ms Maureen Manyama was appointed as the Chief Financial Officer, Professor Brett Bowman as the Head of Postgraduate Strategy within the Research Office, and Dr Daisy Selematsela as the Head of Wits Libraries.

On transformation, the VC reported on the new Mid-Career Academic Transitions Programme, which builds on the Early Career Academic Development Programme, the securing of R30 million from Carnegie for the extended Diversifying the Academy Programme. The Prevention and Eradication of Bullying Policy has also been implemented with the support of social justice committees.

An update on salary negotiations was provided and it was noted that an agreement had been reached with NEHAWU and ALTA in respect of salary increases and ancillary matters for 2022. These increases were applied to all non-unionised employees. Mediation had been undertaken with other members of the joint union caucus and a final outcome is still to be reached.

Finally, the VC expressed concern over the delayed re-opening of the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) following the fire in April last year, which has severely impacted on the clinical training of students. He added that he is in liaison with the Premier's office and the Gauteng Department of Health regarding the matter, including the move of the Wits Dental School to the CHBAH. A Council member also expressed concern about the precariousness of the clinical training platforms and the relationship with the State in this regard.

The VC concluded by congratulating staff and students on their achievements, including Professor Helen Rees, who was awarded the prestigious *L'ordre national du Mérite* from the French President, and Professor Andrew Forbes, who was awarded the 2022 Sang Soo Lee Award. He also mentioned Dr Boitumelo Innocent Ramatsetse, the winner of a 2021 National Science and Technology Forum award who was appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa to the National Planning Commission, and the students who won the Nedbank/Old Mutual Budget Speech competition this year.

### **Matters from the University Forum**

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic presented the teaching and learning report that served at the last meeting of the University Forum. The Report focused on the transformation of teaching and learning over the past three years, the impact of COVID-19 including issues related to remote assessment and academic integrity. The 2022 blended learning approach was also presented, as part of the broader Teaching and Learning Plan.

### **Delegation of Authority**

A comprehensive presentation on the revised Delegation of Authority Document was made by Ms Tasneem Wadvalla, in her capacity as the Head of Legal Services. It included the responsibilities of various persons, committees, and entities in the University; risk management processes; procurement processes; tender processes; standard contracts; and governance protocols. Council members requested clarity on matters related to compliance, ESG, the differences between advisory positions, authoritative powers, and delegation within the organisational structure.

### **Clinical Training Platforms**

The VC indicated that one of the risks facing the University was the clinical training platforms, on which the University was dependent for a large part of its research, training, and service in the health sciences. He elaborated on the fragmented relationship with some local and provincial hospitals and health departments, and other public sector entities. He indicated that they had held discussions at the local, provincial, and national levels, and that a Memorandum of Agreement was due to be signed by the University around the academic health complexes, which envisages Wits having adequate representation and real influence in joint committees. An update was also provided on the progress made by the National Department of Health and the DBSA on the re-opening of the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting of Council is scheduled to take place on 9 June 2022.

Thank you

**Ms Carol Crosley**

**Secretary to Council**

**28 April 2022**