



CONVOCATION

2015 - 2019

REPORT

*Cementing the foundation for a strong and effective
Convocation of Mangosuthu University Technology for Institutional pre-eminence and
increased graduate success*

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1. OPENING MESSAGE

Greetings to;

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Malaza

Members of Executive Management and support staff present

My fellow colleagues in the leadership of MUT Convocation, Deputy President- Mr. Andile Mafa, the Convocation Treasurer – Mr. Sfiso Gumede and our *ex officio* secretary, the Registrar of the Institution – Mr. Mike Naidoo, and

My most profound greetings goes to MUT Alumni and the entire MUT Convocation present here today.

The ConvExco appreciates everyone's attendance in today's Annual General Meeting. Such presence on this gathering is directly interpreted as a symbol of great commitment to Institutional development and sustainability. On the same token, such a degree of commitment cannot be viewed in isolation to the harsh realities faced by our graduates, both employed and unemployed in the outside world. Thus, MUT becomes a shelter, an umbrella under which we all meet with common interest, where we get to converge with people we can deeply regard as family. Such a congregation become yet another platform for re-connecting. It seeks to present an opportunity for the Alumni to share opportunities. As well as a space where Convocants meet to look into various means for opportunities to re-invest into this institution which was known as ManTech (Mangosuthu Technikon) now known as MUT (Mangosuthu University of Technology).

As the Convocation in general, Alumni in particular, we have an enormous responsibility of ensuring that our Institution stands and achieve pre-eminence.

As we convene the 2019 MUT Convocation AGM, It is with sadness to note that in the year 2018 we lost the former and longest serving MUT Convocation President Mr Mabaso. He will always be remembered and in his honour, we will build a strong and effective Convocation of the Mangosuthu University of Technology. On the same token, we extend our condolences to many who have departed amongst us, they will always be remembered.

2. BACKGROUND

The Convocation of the Mangosuthu University of Technology is only at what could be regarded as a foundation phase. Whilst the Institution has been in existence to over 40 years, this structure had struggled to have life.

There are many factors that can be attributed to this, one of them being the uncertainty or lack of a common understanding about what the structure is responsible for. Our records only trace back the history of the structure from the Presidency of the late Mr. Khumalo. From that Presidency an AGM was convened in 2011 at the CR Venue where a collective led by Mr. Cebekhulu as President was elected. During both the terms recorded in history as above, no record proves of any activity of the structure.

In 2015 following the observation we made of the structure's dysfunctionality, we took a decision to revive it as we believed and still do believe that it is a very strategic source for mitigating a variety of challenges faced by graduates as well as the Institution in general. Following discussions back and forth with the office of the Registrar, there was an agreement to revive this structure and this led to the 2015 AGM which elected the current leadership.

There was no report or handover to that 2015 AGM. Now, because there was no report, there were no engagements to inform a mandate for the leadership. Nevertheless, in its first meeting, the then elected leadership took it upon itself to set priorities (1) The re-working on & finalisation of the Constitution as the basic founding document regulating the very existence of the structure, (2) Creating an awareness of the structure amongst graduates and (3) Developing a program of action for taking the structure forward.

3. CURRENT STATE OF THE CONVEXCO

3.1. Members of ConvExco

The Convocation leadership is still intact as elected in November 2015 at Bozzoli Hall, standing as follows:-

- Mr. Kwenza Madlala as President
- Mr. Andile Mafa as Deputy President
- Mr. Sfiso Gumede as Treasurer

ex officio members are as follows:-

- Mike Naidoo, the Registry of the Institution as *ex officio* Secretary

- Alumni Relations Officer as *ex officio* member

It is with pleasure to report that the Alumni Relations Office which had been vacant and at times unstable for a while now has an incumbent. We have advised the Marketing and Communications Department that it is our wish that the incumbent in this office is utilised solely for the work of the alumni.



From the left, Mr. Sfiso Gumede – Convocation Treasurer, Centre , Mr. Kwenza Madlala - Convocation President, & on the Right, Mr. Andile Mafa - Convocation Deputy President.

3.2. Meetings of ConvExco

The ConvExco has had countless meetings, some which were amongst elected office bearers only and some with *ex officio* members. There has been no challenge in this regard. The geographical location of all members has made it easy to meet up in person every now and then when a need arise.

Because of the rapid frequency of the meetings, it has been impossible for us to present a breakdown of the number of meetings.

3.3. Annual General Meetings for the term 2015-2019

The ConvExco has managed to convene 3 successful AGMs in the past 4 years of its term.

- In the year 2016 AGM sat but on the first attempt could not quorate and was only in quorate on the second attempt.
- The 2017 AGM could not be convened due to work load emanating from pressing Council commitment.

- The 2018 AGM was convened successfully.
- The 2019 AGM is convened as seating today.

Despite the various challenges, as the ConvExco we are satisfied with this pattern of successfully convened AGMs. It must be noted that this is also happening for the first time in the history of the structure and it is a step in the right direction. The desirable state is that of AGMs convened as the name says, annually.

3.4. Convocation attendance to address graduations

This is one critical platform where the Convocation engages new graduates about the importance of re-uniting with the institution. The ConvExco has ensured that it attends to this regularly to extend a congratulatory and welcoming message of Alumni to the Convocation.

Due to the number of days the Institution hosts its graduation ceremonies on, members of the ConvExco take turns in attending to this responsibility and they have done so consistently over the years of the term.

4. MACRO FACTOR ANALYSIS

An Institution, with its entire community (Students, Academic and support staff, graduates, management and council) is a fraction of society. As such it exists within broader general societal challenges. Both Domestic and Global economic factors, socio-political factors, regionalism, Industrialisation and other factors, have a huge influence in its sustainability as well as on the success of graduates. Therefore, it would be ignorance of us to come together to find ourselves and chart a way forward without touching base with these realities, their impact and most importantly answer the big question of what needs to be done.

Some of the issues this report seek to highlight include, amongst others, graduate unemployment, the effects of the 4th Industrial Revolution, Land Expropriation possible effects of Agriculture and the importance of de-colonising Education.

4.1. Graduates Unemployment

Unemployment in general remains on a high currently seating at 29.1% which is an increase from 27.5% in 2018. Looking at the trends in unemployment according to Statistics South Africa, it is evident that Unemployment has sat at an average of about 27% for the past 2 to 3 years and this has very little likelihood for deterioration but instead it is most probable to increase.

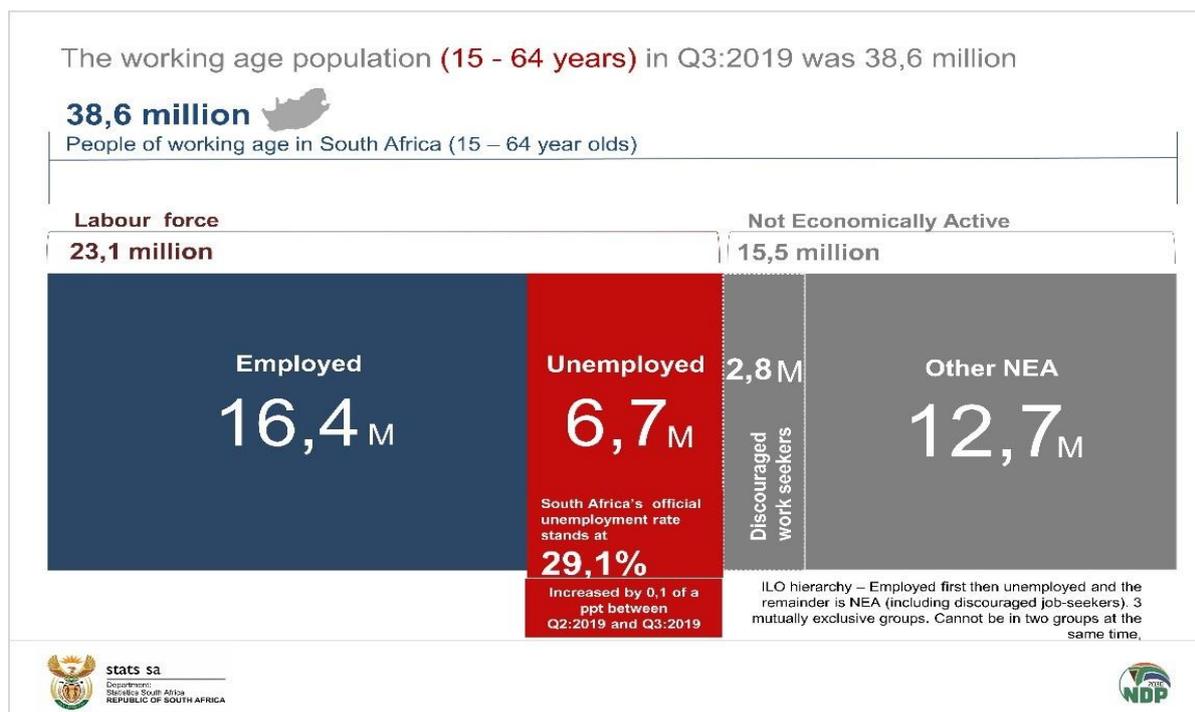
Unemployment in S.A:



In actual numbers, the number of unemployed increased by plus 127 thousand to over 6.21 Million in 2019. Amongst the 6.21 Million plus unemployed S.A citizens are our own graduates as MUT, these are students we shared a lecture room with, students we lectured and as an Institution there are people we moulded and released with a hope that with the qualifications we gave them, they will be also to secure employment and better their lives and those of their families.

Whilst the rate of unemployed graduate is low in comparison to the general rate of unemployment, there is another portion of the unemployment named the "discouraged work seekers" which is a disgruntled fraction that has even ceased to seek employment. Arguably, the number of unemployed graduates has a significant impact on this group. With each community observing graduates struggling to secure employment, it is not difficult to believe that this has a direct correlation with the disgruntlement of uneducated unemployed job seekers.

Below is a picture of the current Labour Market:



The unemployment quagmire presents numerous other challenges and social ills, these include amongst others, depression as a growing concern which itself leads to drug abuse and even suicide. Institutions of Higher Learning must invest in producing researched ideas to address Unemployment as well provide a post service to unemployed graduates during such trying times.

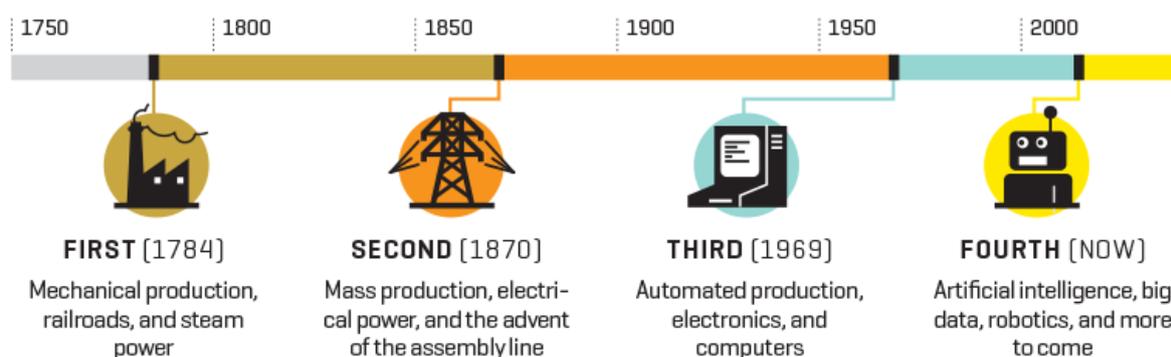
We continue to urge that graduates of our Institution give opportunities share opportunities with one another within the confines of relevant legal frameworks.

4.2. The effects of the 4th Industrial Revolution

Universities of Technology by inventions are structured to specializes in Engineering, technology, Applied Science and sometimes Natural Sciences. MUT is strategically placed to meet the challenges presented by new technologies and thus position itself as an institution of choice. As a University of Technology, MUT should not be responsive to Technological Advancements but must be leading in technology invention. We are very pleased to learn about the recognition given to the MUT **drone project** which the South African Space Agency selected as one of its top 10 innovations in the entire country. This is just one indication of the technological opportunities this Institution has. Unless the institution moves ahead of Technology and invests in research to keep up, it may find itself with courses that are obsolete and this may render it irrelevant as a UoT.

The below diagram clearly illustrate the rapid technological developments between the 3rd and the 4th industrial. Such requires a dynamic and innovation driven Institution of Higher Learning particularly when its primary mandate is the specialisation on Technology.

THE FOUR INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS



Beyond intensified research initiatives to keep up with technology and re-structuring courses for alignment to the 4th Industrial Revolution, MUT must look into incorporating its Alumni in Technological Industries into this advancements. The Incorporation of Alumni in this manner will yield multiple benefits for the Institution, one of which is keeping up to industry expectations as well as creating a platform for them to share amongst themselves best practices for individual development and to make a meaningful contribution in their place of work.

This would also provide a benefit of keeping up with Industry Technological trends for MUT's unemployed graduates who are in fast paced fields like Information Technology, Engineering etc.

4.3. Land Expropriation possible effects of Agriculture

The call for Land expropriation must be seen as an opportunity for MUT and its graduates. Our Natural Sciences Faculty has made progressive sphere in tapping into the Agricultural sphere. The Institute for Rural Development and Community Engagement (IRDCE)'s work with small farms around KZN is a great foundation for positioning MUT as a strategic central partner of Agricultural related developments. The Institution must seek Public-Private Partnership MoU through the Department of Agriculture to place itself at the centre of a program to educate small farmers and also equip them for the development and sustainability of both subsistent and commercial farming.

Agriculture as demonstrated below plays a significant role in the country's economy and amongst these critical benefits is a greater opportunity for employment.

Figure 1: The role of agriculture in the economy



The positioning of MUT in Agriculture would make it a force to be reckoned with. MUT graduates in this field would benefit immensely should the opportunity be ceased and maximised

On a related note, it is important that we congratulate and the First Class of graduates which graduated with a **Masters in Nature Conservation in 2018**. The first qualification of this nature in South Africa and its coming from MUT. Such news are amongst countless other reasons we take pride in being associated with this Institution.

4.4. The importance of de-colonising education

Amongst the trending critical discussions in higher Education is the issues of Free Education, a concept derived from the South African Student's Congress (SASCO)'s call for Free Quality and Compulsory Education. The limitation of this call to only free monetary education leaves a lot to be desired. The Convocation of MUT must welcome the Free Education declaration by the ANC-led South African Government, however in welcoming it, must call for a deep interrogation of its implications and also call for the extension of it to include Quality and Compulsory. Unfortunately, till date the call has not been translated into action.

The challenges graduates across the country face today emanates largely from the colonisation of Education. A curriculum and structure of the current education system is presenting a perpetually incomplete image which promises a better future (limited to employment) upon graduation. It seeks to create a paid wage labourer in a country with a

system designed to create reserve labour to limit the power of the working class. In a country with such a high rate of Unemployment, an Education system which focuses mainly on creating Job seekers is unjust, perpetuates class antagonism, intergenerational poverty and inequalities. It is an educational system long overdue for review and we must challenge it for the benefit of generations to come, they must come out far more better products than us so that they do not suffer with employment as their only hope.

It is important that the Institution re-looks at the structure of the courses it offers, using Institutional Autonomy and Academic freedom as interim means. It is slightly comforting to learn that the Institution is in a process of introducing Entrepreneurial Skills subjects across all courses, however much more needs to be done. It cannot be business as usual.

5. MICRO FACTOR ANALYSIS

5.1. Strategic direction of the Institution

The University today despite the huge challenges around funding particularly the 3rd Income stream in light of the socio-economic plight of the students we attract, is being stabilised. This is important to note because we are coming from an era of Council interference in the Management of the Institution as well as an era of Management instability. For some three to Four years our Institution had no Vice Chancellor & Principal and most amongst Management were on acting capacity.

The Institution currently has an incumbent VC and this helps a lot in shaping and the execution of the strategic vision – The VCs report speaks to this.

5.2. Curriculum reform

The issue of curriculum is central to graduate success. It is the relevance of the curriculum which gives value to the Qualifications our graduates hold, it is in this regard that the Institution must be constantly engaged with Industries to assess the need and then structure curriculum to respond to that. We believe that this will increase the graduate employability.

We are also excited about the Institution's move for the introduction of Entrepreneurial subject on each qualification. This seeks to respond to the employer-employee ratio quagmire. There are countless unemployed graduates versus the number of employers and for us as a country to mitigate this, we need to embark on a deliberate process of developing employers.

5.3. Internal Convocation membership representation

As the ConvExco we feel that it is necessary to deal with this issue of representation of internal Convocation members. This emanate from our analysis that there may be a confusion around this as it relates particularly to the role of Convocation Versus the role of the SRC and the Unions. If these are not attended to they make create an unnecessary tensions between these structures.

Internal members of Convocation are represented primarily by their respective bodies, i.e. post-graduate represented primarily by the SRC and the Academic staff represented primarily by their respective Unions.

The role of Convocation is to bring together the entire University community, to look into the state of the institution and graduates and develop a program of action mitigate the challenges, move the Institution forward and improve graduate success.

5.4. Post graduate Funding

There is a serious challenge around post graduate Funding. Generally NRF funds research courses. Whilst it use to provide some funding for B-Tech courses because of the Research subject, with the change from B-Techs to Advanced Diplomas, no funding is made available. This lack of such financial assistant has a detrimental effect on post-graduate students' success rate. The little funding sources from the SETAs does not cover the full cost of study.

As the University Convocation, we must look into means of mitigating this challenge considering that the increase in post graduate courses elevates our university amongst other UoTs. Through a financially sound Alumni Trust Fund, we believe that we can be in a position to establish a Post-Graduate bursary scheme for those who further their studies within the Institution.

6. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON POA

6.1. Convocation Constitution

It is important to note that the adoption of the Convocation Constitution in 2016 AGM has assisted a great deal. There is now clarity on a number of issues. Our constitution, like any other, is indeed not a perfect document hence there will be a need to review and amend from time to time. Any proposed amendments shall be only effected if approved by AGM.

6.2. Convocation Influence

The Convocation of MUT is a force to be reckoned with within the Institution, this comes as a result of the Deployment the Executive of Convocation made to the University Council and as well as the extent to which such deployment has been central in the transformation of Council and bringing about stability in MUT. The following is the breakdown of representation of Convocation on Institutional structures:-

6.2.1. University Council

After a two year long representation battle with Council, the Convocation was ultimately allowed to have representation in Council in year 2017 and subsequently the following was per representation as well as Council deployment to its Committees:-

1. President of Convocation: K Madlala

- Member of Council
- Chairperson of the Human Resources Committee of Council
- Member of the Executive Committee of Council (EXCO)
- Deputy Chairperson of the Institutional Forum.

2. Deputy President: A Mafa

- Member of Council
- Member of the Audit and Risk committee
- Member of the Planning and Resources Committee

The above is evidence of the entrenched influence of the Convocation within the governance structure of the Institution and it flows throughout the University.

6.2.2. Institutional Forum

In the recently approved Institutional Forum Charter, the Convocation is entitled to deploy (2) of its members. The Institutional Forum, as an advisory board to the University Council, is a critical structure in driving the Transformation agenda. The Executive Committee of the convocation made recommendations around this deployments but was unfortunately taken back and forth leading to date. Subsequently the Convocation remains without representatives in the Institutional Forum.

It is the view of the Convocation leadership that there should be more representation of Convocation across Institutional structures, for example, the Senate of the Institution is a structure mandated to deal with academic including issues if curriculum, amongst MUT

graduates are captains of industries who can made a meaningful contribution to the relevance of curriculum offered by the institution.

6.3. Establishment of an Internal Audit Department

Upon election into the ConvExco, one area of critical concern for us was around the perpetual allegations of corruption within the Institution. It was amongst our priority strategic drivers to ensure that the Institution opens an Internal Audit department.

We are glad that the Institution now has such a department which is responsible for ensuring good governance, financial and systems integrity and is a watch dog of council in case there is any maladministration.

6.4 Convocation/ Alumni Programs

Numerous Alumni programs have taken place during this term of office and the attendance has been impressive. Amongst other programs, we mention the Alumni Road Show which included a dinner with Graduates in Richard's bay, Mpumalanga and Gauteng. There has also been Gala Dinners around Durban, Internal Convocation staff engagement and Annual alumni awards hosted by the Institution.

We commend the Marketing Department for leading the implementation of such programs which seek to re-connect MUT graduates with the Institution, on the same note we appreciate all graduates who show interest in such programs and encourage more participation going forward.

6.5. Alumni Trust Fund

The Convocation of MUT, like any Convocation structure must create its own budget through the contributions made by members. In light of this, the Convocation in its AGM adopted the creation of an Alumni Trust Fund. This shall be a fund administered by a Board which will be composed of relevant Institutional officials and the Executive of Convocation. All monies generated shall be reported on at AGM through a Financial Report.

The success of any program of Convocation shall be reliant on the ability for generate fund for the structure. For example, Noting that the Institution has over 40 000 graduates, if only 4 000 MUT graduates consistently donate R100 a month towards the Fund, the Convocation can generate about 4.8million. This money can make a meaningful contribution in the execution of programs adopted at AGM including in the development of the Institution.

The Alumni Trust Fund will also assist in mitigating post-graduate financial challenges as well as intervene through Alumni Bursary schemes.

6.6. Convocation Graduate placement program

Linked to graduate unemployment is the issue of lack of experience required for entrance positions into the industry. We welcome and heavily support the notion of scrapping out of experience for entry level position.

In bridging the experience gap, the 2018 Convocation AGM adopted an MUT graduate placement program. Through this program, graduates will be placed across various spheres related to their qualifications and paid a stipend by the MUT Convocation. This program will be structured to be impactful to a graduate for the entire duration of the placement. Mentorship and close monitoring of workplace adaptability, functionality and success will be guided through a series of quarterly sessions with the placed graduates as well feedback sessions with the companies where they will be placed.

It is our view that this would be very impactful and will be a great brotherly act to assist those amongst us in deep need of experience. We cannot seat and wait for government to provide opportunities, this is within our own means and we must make it work.

Once enough financial capacity has been generated, the leadership of Convocation must engage the CEOs of various companies around the Execution of this mandate.

6.7. Alumni Chapters

A few chapters have been launched through the Marketing Department, functionality of such remains a concern. In the current form, Alumni Chapters are structured around demographic locations. It is our view that whilst Chapters may be productive, more sense could be realised through further adding profession in their grouping. One of the biggest challenge in mobilising Alumni is the question of individual benefit. Consolidating chapters around professionalism will provide a wide range of individual benefit to MUT graduates.

In their own professional space, they will be able to share trends and best practices. It would provide personal growth and workplace significance.

Universities are engaged in a business of producing a human resource for Industries, however they have no service plan to keep their produce relevant and worthy of the market. This platform shall seek to cultivate particularly graduates who are new in the labour market.

6.8. Alumni Business Forum and Business Consortium

In our "education business unusual" thinking, the purpose of restructuring MUT to meet up with the demands and challenges posed to Graduates, developing entrepreneurs is one of the

critical areas for the Institution to invest in. With the high rate of unemployment, the need to produce entrepreneurs requires no further emphasis.

The MUT ConvExco has received and supports a proposal for the establishment of the Alumni Business Forum, a business chapter of the Alumni. It is important that the Institution natures its own timber into the business area. This will open more avenues for graduate development and employment with direct positive implication to the Institution's donor income stream.

Beyond the existence of the proposed forum, we forwarded a proposal that AGM mandates the ConvExco with facilitating the opening of a Business consortium, this consortium will become a joint venture of various companies which would be tasked with amongst other things, a mandate to ensure the development of small businesses of MUT graduates and liaising with the Institution to identify business opportunities where relevant and qualifying companies of MUT graduates can benefit. It is our vision that this MUT Convocation business consortium will in future gain enough financial capacity to seize business opportunities across the KZN Province and beyond.

The concept was approved at the 2018 AGM and a process was initiated with the Institution to get the structure off the ground. Some challenges emerged around role conflict and authority lines. The VC has been engaged to look into the administrative aspect of getting this structure functional. The leadership which will be appointed will have to look into the establishment of the consortium. The consortium will have to have a board for accountability and proper administration purposes.

7. FUNDING

Funding remains a challenge in the execution of the programs of the Convocation. As means to resolve this challenge, we encourage member of the Convocation to invest the little they can towards strengthening it to become an effective tool for the benefit of both the graduates and institution.

As things stand, the Convocation remains without any budget and runs its activities from the Marketing and Communications Department.



Alumni Giving - Convocation

Bank Account	40-7755-0173
Bank Name	ABSA
Branch Code	ABSA Public Sector KZN 632005
Account Name	Mangosuthu University of Technology
Reference	1502/60317 Convocation
Submit proof of donation to	Director: alumni Relations Office alumni@mut.ac.za / zama@mut.ac.za
Telephone	031 907 7161

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8. CONCLUSION

The structure has been given life, now we must move into execution. We, the Convocation of Mangosuthu University of Technology have a great potential within us to take this Institution to greater heights and also uplift one another both to improve the graduate success rate and also to build a stringer reputation for the MUT brand.

Before us lies a great opportunity, let us build it.

THANK YOU.

"Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories..."

— Amilcar Cabral, Revolution in Guinea