

# From the Acting Vice-Chancellor

**Professor Marcus Ramogale**

The year 2020 should not go down in history as subversive of MUT's academic enterprise. It should be remembered as the year we built a fortification to "save the academic year and save lives" during a pandemic which shut schools and universities across the entire world. All this in spite of the fact that as an historically disadvantaged institution, we are among the world's most marginalised when it comes to providing digital programme offerings.



*Professor Marcus Ramogale*

Since 17 June we have been clear that we would heed the clarion call of Dr Blade Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education and Training, Science and Innovation, "to save the academic year and to save lives" through a phased-in return to campus under Level 3 of the lockdown. However, we knew that achieving this would require out-of-the-box thinking.

A preliminary investigation of how our students consume online learning showed that the resources they had to access online learning were either outdated, limiting in terms of bandwidth, or not available at all. To ensure that "No student is left behind", we commenced a journey into the uncharted waters of multimodal teaching, learning and assessment. We developed a Multimodal Teaching, Learning and Assessment Plan (MTLAP) which would cater for the following categories of students:

- ◆ students who are unable to work effectively at home under lockdown conditions, for a range of reasons;
- ◆ students who do not have access to devices and cannot engage in any form of online or digital learning;

- ◆ students who may have devices but do not have data and/or connectivity to enable participation in online learning opportunities, but could engage in digital learning if electronic material were made available;
- ◆ students who have devices, data, connectivity and conducive study conditions and can participate in online learning opportunities; and
- ◆ students living with disabilities, who are part of all the groups described above.

In order to support the MTLAP we worked with the faculty deans to develop a project plan in which we revised the academic calendar and brought clinical students back to campus on 1 July, followed by final-year students and then postgraduate students to make up the first 33%. For more than 60 days, we have been getting to grips with the MTLAP. From 1 July we made appropriate teaching and learning materials available on our learning management system, Blackboard, to ensure that even those students who were not on campus would not be excluded in our efforts to save lives and save the academic year.

We refuse to let the events of 2020 disrupt the future of our students who aspire to become professionals and play a role in revitalising our struggling economy.