
VICE CHANCELLOR'S STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS
Annual General Meeting, Convocation
10 December 2022

Greetings to you all.

INTRODUCTION

It seems like a few weeks since we last met. Without resorting to cliché, I must echo what everyone is saying this week, 'Time flies'. December is now upon us. A silly season, a season of joy, a spiritual season, a festive season, each depending on the angle you are speaking from.

We meet today again without COVID-19 restrictions. I must extend my gratitude to all of you for support during this time and to those who were students at the time, thanks for your compliance. We would have become a COVID-19 epicentre had we not had a buy-in from the SRC, students, staff and all our stakeholders. Your role was enormous in the sense that when we introduced new measures to *Save the Academic Year and to Save Lives*, these were accepted despite the new stringent measures. The curriculum needed to factor in a blended approach and the staff and students with the support of organized labour, all rallied behind the new drastic measures. In the beginning, we all had a rocky start, but we have adjusted for the better.


Like many universities, we have adapted to blended learning which is a subset of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. We have all been able to cascade the technology gains to our wide-ranging stakeholders and today exemplifies how far we have come. I am happy to see that our alumni are joining in from different places without having to waste scarce resources, protect yourselves from driving long distances and to tune in from the comfort of your homes. Today, I wish to share with you a few developments that have taken place within the University. I will start with the general successes and then finally end with governance issues.

OUR 2022 SUCCESSES

Some of our successes are as follows:

1. Full accreditation from ECSA for all Engineering programmes

On 09 September 2022, after a long review of two Engineering programmes by the Engineering Council of South Africa, (ECSA), we celebrated the full accreditation of both Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering programmes for the period of five



years. This is a first in the history of MUT to have programmes fully accredited by ECSA for a period of five years. In the past, it would be a minimum of two years and/conditional accreditation. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the work

of the Acting Dean in the Faculty of Engineering, Professor Babatunde Bakare, and his team. Well done to him and all his colleagues.

2. Completion of the new Engineering Building

Following on the wave of success in the Faculty of Engineering, I am also happy to share with you that the New Engineering Laboratory has been finally completed. We are grateful to DHET for its mission to put MUT on par with other universities. This supports our Vision 2025, which is to be “a transformed, equitable, sustainable and academically excellent University of Technology anchored in its communities”. The equitable distribution of resources by DHET will go a long way towards making MUT meet its Vision 2025 and improving the quality of our Teaching and Learning, Research and Innovation, as well as Community Engagement. The building boasts 56 offices which will accommodate Electrical Engineering, Construction Management and Quantity Surveying. Some parts on the ground floor would be occupied by the research laboratories for:

- Environmental Pollution and Remediation Research
- MUT Climate Change Centre funded by GIZ.

As I mention GIZ, please note that this is a German Cooperation Funding Agency which has funded this new Climate Change Centre to the value of R12 million. I wish to recognize the role played by MarComms and the Acting Dean, Professor Babatunde, in collaborating with Siyacanda Energy which now has an MoU with MUT and seeks to make the establishment of this centre a success. The Acting Dean and another faculty member are currently in Germany to be trained in the use of high-level equipment that will be installed in the Climate Change Centre. Upon their return, they will launch a programme where 15 students will be trained every semester. This will give the students a competitive edge and selection will be based on merit.

3. Institutional Quality Audit

Over the past 18-months, MUT, like all universities in the country, had to undergo an Institutional Quality Audit in November. The purpose is for universities to reflect on their fitness for purpose. The process allowed for each university to first develop its own Self-Evaluation and Reflection document which is supported by its evidence on quality. It was a huge project which involved every segment of the University’s stakeholders and was ably managed by the Teaching and Learning Directorate. I am grateful to everyone who participated. We were given some positive preliminary feedback. We are ready to implement recommendations that are aimed at advancing the vision of the University.

4. Support of the NPO sector to our communities and to MUT

While other partners receive our gratitude, I wish to acknowledge the role played by Gift of the Givers towards the sustainability of the University. This year, we had three key initiatives supported by Gift of the Givers and these are:

- The establishment of the Student Pantry.
This pantry allows indigent students to fight food insecurity with dignity. There are about 250 students who are supported monthly.
- The installation of a new Water Tank whose capacity is 440 000 litres per day.
This installation has improved the water flow since the beginning of November after the University had been affected by the floods in April this year.
- The training of 100 students and community members to build resilience during disasters.

Discussions between MarComms and Gift of the Givers resulted in trying to find solutions on how communities could be able to assist one another during disasters and in times of distress, instead of waiting for help to come by. The two-day training enabled them to receive an accredited First Aid certificate that will also boost the chances of becoming more employable.

5. The internationalisation of MUT

In November alone, MUT has hosted two meetings that involved French emissaries who have come on a fact-finding mission to get their students to spend a semester here at Umlazi Township and for MUT to send its own students to France. One MoU has been signed and the other one is being consulted upon by colleagues who are bilingual in French and English. Two weeks ago, we hosted a successful International Week which was attended and had delegates from sister universities locally, and in the USA, with MUT partners such as the US Consulate, DAAD, Humboldt, BrandSA, DHET, USAf, NRF and many more presenting and in attendance. It would be remiss not to mention that there were also speakers from the USA: Appalachian State University, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, alongside MUT participants. Perhaps the capstone speaker was a student from Univen who is on a cultural immersion programme in Germany. That is the future that we wish for our students - to be able to navigate the world on their own. This has been my vision, to ensure that MUT operates on a global platform.

6. MUT Alumni support and involvement in university projects in 2022

Our graduates are primary stakeholders of the institution who play many roles towards the sustainability of our university. I would like to mention the notable support that the university received from alumni in support of university projects. The support provided was pro-bono, with no payment or remuneration given to the alumni by the university. I would like to mention the following:

1. Dr Sipho Ndlela – Principal System Engineer at Obantarla Corporation, USA

Gave a talk on MUT Radio sharing international employment opportunities available to MUT graduates specifically within various engineering companies in the United States, where he is based.

2. Nomcebo Kunene – Cluster Manager Protected Areas: Mpumalanga Tourism & Parks Agency

Oscar Mthimkhulu – Chief Executive Officer of Sabi Sands Wildtuin

Sthembile Nkosi – Lecturer at MUT's Department of Nature Conservation

Conducted a masterclass on the conservation and sustainability of South Africa's Flora and Fauna in commemoration of World Wildlife Day.

3. Thembinkosi Masinga – Chief Executive Officer of Kingdom Power

Conducted a Masterclass on water-saving solutions in commemoration of World Water Day.

4. Jabulani Ngubane- Executive for Tourism and Business Development - iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

Conducted a guest lecture for the diploma and advance diploma Nature Conservation students.

5. Dr Thandeka Ellenson - Chief Executive Officer of the Moses Kotane Institute

Presented at the MUT's Empowered Administrators Conference

6. Sthembile Ntombela – Chief Executive Officer of Brand South Africa

Provided support to the Empowered Administrators Conference as well as the International Week.

7. Sandile Mahlaba – Executive for Microsoft KZN Public Sector

Conducted a Microsoft Advanced Masterclass for guests of the Empowered Administrators Conference.

8. Mthokozisi Luthuli – Lecturer at the Durban University of Technology

Presented at the Empowered Administrators Conference.

9. Simanga Mathonsi – Managing Director of Dunga Accounting Services

Mentored final year Accounting students focusing on entrepreneurship and business sustainability.

10. Andile Mafa – Local Coordinator for Ranyaka Foundation

Presented during the SASUF Goes Digital Conference, and at the MUT International Week.

11. Nkululeko Mthembu – Managing Director of Azadi Consulting

Sponsored toiletries to the MUT pantry to support first-year students to close the gap while the students await NSFAS allowances.

12. Trevor Govender – Lecturer Department of Nature Conservation

Conducted a Masterclass in Commemoration of World Oceans Day (Trevor's talk was also carried by various local and national media outlets).

13. Bright Hlongwane – Managing Director of Isimangaliso Group

Conducted a Masterclass on entrepreneurship with a focus on exploring global opportunities.

14. Smanga Mbatha- Chief Whip of the electoral council at Ward 14

Organised and co-funded a career guidance session for fifteen schools around kwaNongoma, giving MUT an exclusive opportunity to market the institution to these potential students.

15. Karabo Mlomo – Facilitator for Standard Chattered future makers program

Conducted a design thinking entrepreneurship Masterclass for start-up student and alumni entrepreneurs. The training was provided in partnership with Standard Bank. The role of alumni in advancing the institution, in giving back, cannot be over-estimated.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2022


Several key developments occurred during the course of 2022:

- Water Challenges were experienced, as mentioned, after the April floods, and we have begun to resolve the crisis.
- The University went through assessment following the appointment of an Assessor, Professor Anthony Staak, by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande.
- Mutual Separation with the Former Vice-Chancellor was achieved.
- The 2022 Graduation ceremony was physical for the first time after the hiatus necessitated by the pandemic and fove sessions were held in August. This year we had more women graduate than in any other year. This affirms our strategic intent to emancipate and empower the underprivileged and previously disadvantaged individuals through education. The percentage of females graduating this year is at 58%, a significant accomplishment. These were also the first graduandi to be robed in our new corporate identity-wear.
- A new Chancellor, Mr Sandile Zungu, has been appointed.
- SRC elections were held and a new SRC has been inaugurated.
- ConvexCo has been active and has launched a new Alumni Chapter in Ulundi in October: we acknowledge its role in the University.

Governance and Leadership

At this juncture, let me share with you what is general knowledge. This is what we have also shared with staff, students and stakeholders using our multiple communication platforms.

1. As per a government gazette issued by the Minister of HE and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, the MUT University Council was dissolved following its meeting held on the 28 September 2023.
2. An administrator, Professor Lourens van Staden, was appointed w.e.f 28 September 2022 to fulfil the role of Council and attend to other matters as outlined in the terms of reference of his appointment.
3. The duration of the term of the Administrator will be for the maximum of 24 months.
4. Two major tasks that need to be finalized during his stay will be the formation of a new University Council and the filling of the VC Position.
5. The Administrator has already visited the University with a team of three individuals who will provide him support in Financial, Strategy and Project Management. All the



University constituencies have committed to provide the Administrator with the support required.

The Administrator's Team is currently focussing on critical matters and submissions, Rules of engagement, and its Communication plan, and will meet as scheduled.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I would like to end this address *by* thanking all of you for your attendance and wishing you well for the new year. There is much to be done at MUT, and we value and look forward to your continued support.

**PROFESSOR M RAMOGALE
ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR**

5 DECEMBER 2022

