

## Inauguration speech

### **The role of Universities in Africa's futures in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

When the history of SA and Africa's development is written, the name of this University will feature prominently as one of the key institutions that made a major contribution to their prosperity, where one and all can develop to their full potential. The University of Pretoria will, through excellence in knowledge creation, impactful and relevant research, high-quality academic programmes, innovative teaching and learning, and social responsiveness and engagement, make a decisive difference to transforming Africa's futures.

Today, South Africa and Africa urgently need, in every sector, good leaders, who have foresight and wisdom, well-educated, well-skilled, rounded citizens, and strong institutions that can anchor sustainable democratic futures, inclusive economic development and social progress. Among the institutions Africa needs are high-quality universities that are locally responsive, that demonstrate contextual relevance and are comparable to the best globally. Universities have a critical role to play in achieving sustained, sustainable and inclusive development. They must embrace this role without equivocation.

Africa is rich in natural resources, has a growing and youthful population but has yet to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. To address this paradoxical situation requires scale and critical mass in its knowledge institutions.

To be able to play their role effectively in Africa's futures, universities must enjoy academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Equally as institutions, Universities must be well-governed, effectively and efficiently managed, and be well-resourced to deliver on their mandates. They must also embrace sustainability in everything they do.

It is true that like many institutions before the democratic breakthrough of 1994, the University of Pretoria was part and parcel of the institutions that supported colonialism and apartheid. It would be disingenuous for me not to say so today and disrespect for all the people who made sacrifices for the struggles for democracy. In recognition of this historical fact and its legacies, the Transformation Committee of the University of Pretoria made the following statement in 2017: "Many South Africans were excluded from obtaining an education and working here. We acknowledge the University's active role in the production and maintenance of the systems of colonialism and apartheid. This imperfect history, coupled with the University's strong tradition of striving for change, underpins our deep desire to move to a just and equitable future."

Since 1994, the University of Pretoria has made some strides in addressing this legacy by making a significant contribution to the creation of a new society. The Centre for Human Rights made a contribution to the drafting of the democratic constitution that is globally acclaimed and which was signed into law in 1996. The Centre also runs five much sought-after and prestigious Human Rights Masters programmes for students from across our continent. One such programme – the Masters in Democratisation and Human Rights in Africa – has been offered for the last 20 years.

In 1976, the apartheid regime shot children in cold blood during the Soweto Uprising, today UP runs an internationally acclaimed Children's Law Centre focused on the rights of children, in a Law Faculty that is in the top 100 in some of the world's University subject rankings. The University is at the forefront of the promotion of human rights to achieve a just and democratic society and is doing much more.

Going forward in this transformative mode, UP will focus on providing access to its high-quality education to as many South Africans and Africans as possible.

Quality matters to the project of better African futures. Quality is critical to making a decisive difference. Africans deserve and must get quality. We are neither second rate people nor children of a lesser God.

The University of Pretoria aspires to and will strive to breathe, live and demonstrate quality in everything it does. It will do so to create a new reality and narrative about our continent as a place of quality, excellence and prosperity.

### **Quality and innovative academic programmes for better African futures**

UP is known for and enjoys a high reputation for the quality of both its professional and research-orientated academic programmes. As a result, its graduates are able to enter and enjoy success in the careers they choose. 93% of our students are either employed or continuing with their studies six months after graduating. We will work towards 100% of them finding employment or pursuing post-graduate studies. UP aspires to and is working on taking the quality of its programmes to the next level in multiple ways.

The academic qualifications of our staff are improving. In 2019, 66% of our staff had PhDs, we compare favourably with our local and global peers. An increase in the proportion of staff with PhDs will increase our capacity for post-graduate supervision. Staff members with PhDs also have the ability to do the more complex research that is needed to transform our continent and its circumstances.

### **Decolonial turn for mental liberation**

As a University, UP will continue through its research and teaching programmes to build a set of intellectual ideas and theories that constitute both an engagement with existing ideas and a self-reflexive exercise and critical reflection on the influence of those ideas. Increasingly across many disciplines at UP, we are taking a multi-, inter-transdisciplinary approach to knowledge creation. There is an emerging consciousness about the limitations of disciplinary lens and siloed approaches to understanding social phenomena. I sense a groping for new paradigms and ways of understanding self and the world. I sense also a strong desire to be more confident about being creators of knowledge and not consumers of received wisdom. I think this is exciting and is wholly consistent with the urge to use knowledge to confront and solve what has been called the wicked problems of our continent. A continent with universities producing new ideas will recover its sense of direction and restore power for its nations to control their own destinies. One should not talk too glibly about a renaissance but it appears there is one on the horizon.

**In the context of a renaissance in thinking or rethinking our intellectual directions and beacons, we here at UP will continuously reform and transform our curriculum. Pursuant to this goal, UP has an institution-wide curriculum renewal and decolonisation strategy and programme.**

The content of the curriculum will reflect an innovative engagement with the local, continental and global, in ways that will enable our graduates to become contextually grounded and yet demonstrate global awareness. Curriculum transformation will in large part be driven by a decolonising imperative, which asserts that knowledge, which liberates and contributes to the creation of new futures, is produced at multiple points globally and not just at centres of imperial power.

In some cases, this decolonising imperative will include displacing the hegemony of imperial narratives of human history and civilisations, by contextualising all forms of knowledge. In place of the dominant colonial and imperial narratives, we will place at the centre of the curriculum, the diversity of human histories and narratives.

### **Access and success**

The opportunity to provide access for individuals with potential for their lives to be transformed by education is of critical importance for our continent. It is a truth universally acknowledged that education provides the means to escape poverty, and it enables social mobility. In turn, educated individuals form the skilled human resource base necessary to create a prosperous and progressive society. Providing access to education to the largest possible number of people enables a society to address poverty, unemployment and inequality.

**We must widen access and expand the higher education system. This is not a matter of choice. There is a pent-up demand for higher education on our continent. We need to increase the proportion of people who receive the quality higher education necessary to realise new futures for our continent. Only when a large proportion of our people are highly educated will we attain the ability to compete globally. We must address the structural and financial issues that impede access to and expansion of higher education as a matter of urgency. We must not make excuses because that is to court underdevelopment.**

In the case of UP providing access to large numbers of students, it's a key means for the University to address histories of exclusion and marginalisation. It's the opportunity to rise to the occasion to educate and skill our continent. UP has consciously chosen to expand access to the high-quality education it provides to as many students as its capacity allows through a high uptake of the state's infrastructure grants. As a result of this progressive approach, UP is the largest contact and residential University in South Africa. Its first-year enrolment in 2019 is just over 10 000 new students, and its total enrolment of students is 55 000. By 2025, the University intends to reach an enrolment of 75 000, with 30% of enrolments in postgraduate programmes; a modest but significant growth in the sector.

**UP will craft strategies to improve staff / student ratios and fund increased enrolments beyond the modest growth without compromising on quality.**

We have two major programmes FLY@UP and FLYHIGHER@UP to address and improve success rates and the completion of academic programmes in minimum time, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. FLY stands for the finish line is yours. The central core of the programmes is providing additional support, including learning materials and/or aids online. These programmes use tracking and monitoring systems, data analytics and analysis, available to both staff and students. The programmes inculcate the value that students should take responsibility for their learning.

UP believes that such nurturing, supportive and nudging campaigns will enable students to succeed and become productive members of society.

**Talents live at UP**

At the same time as supporting all students to succeed, UP is crafting a comprehensive programme to support and nurture all high-performing students to sustain, deepen and improve on their achievements. Through this programme, UP aims to be first choice for top achievers in school-leaving exams and to become the natural home of talented students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This programme will be an investment in excellence, something that should be ordinary in a University; higher education is, after all, about higher achievement. We believe that a distinct, mainstreamed and visible programme will have multiple effects, including motivating all students to become high achievers.

**Innovative teaching and learning**

At the core of the University of Pretoria's teaching and learning philosophy, is the belief in a student-centred pedagogical approach that enables active learning. Also that quality and innovation in teaching impart the knowledge and skills students need to be well-educated graduates. Furthermore, these attributes will enable them to navigate professional career choices or entrepreneurship, to transform their lives and make a contribution to society.

We value the central role of the teacher as the guide, the shepherd, the nurturer and the one who stimulates the intellect of the students. We believe the teacher must also mould students into rounded actively participating citizens, who can shape the futures of a society.

**UP has a long history of adopting technologies in teaching.** We have been at the forefront of hybrid or blended learning approaches. The new digital technologies, especially their interactive capacities, present an opportunity for further innovation by both academics and students. The current generation of students are technology-savvy, digital natives. We believe we will make progress in course pass rates and graduation rates through innovative teaching.

We will continue to make the process of learning empowering so that students develop the autonomy that enables them to make intelligent, independent informed decisions, which is an important attribute that prepares them for the world of work.

Finally, we aim, through high-quality teaching, inquiry-led and innovative participatory learning to develop in our students, critical thinking and analytical skills, high-level research and writing skills, adaptability to change, resilience, creativity and the ability to acquire the habits and a culture conducive to life-long learning. In the current context, which can be called the Age of Data, we teach our students on how to handle and critically analyse diverse, large data sets for research and informed decision making in any context.

### **Research that matters to transform lives**

Speaking of research, Mr Chancellor, Ladies and Gentleman, UP prides itself on being one of the leading research-intensive universities in South Africa and Africa. The University of Pretoria produces high-quality cutting-edge research that is transformative, impactful and relevant to creating new African futures. We do measure up to our strap line research that matters.

We have a rising international profile evidenced by the fact that we are in the top 2% of universities in the world according to some rankings and by the growing number of areas in which we have attained global excellence. **35 UP researchers are in the top 1% according to the Web of Science Index of 2019.**

Using the data verified by the Department of Higher Education and Training, we produced the largest number of research units of all universities in 2017. We are one of the largest if not the largest producer of Doctoral and Master's degree graduates. We host, at present, 235 post-doctoral fellows. We have 15 A-Rated scholars and, at 435, we have the largest proportion of rated researchers in South Africa.

**UP has made major research breakthroughs in a number of areas that not only demonstrate the quality of our research and the calibre of our academics but also transform the lives of our people.** Today, in this hall, there are many such researchers and among them the person most of us have heard of in the last two weeks, Professor Mashudu Tshifularo, who through using 3D technology, has enabled a person to regain his hearing capacity. He tells me you ain't seen nothing yet!

In the QS rankings for 2018, we were ranked in the top 200 universities globally in five areas: Agriculture and Forestry, Archaeology, Architecture and the Built Environment, Law, Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies. In other rankings, we ranked highly and have recognised strengths in Food Security and Bio-Technology as well as Law, Engineering, Accounting, the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences as well as the Biological and Life Sciences. Our Business School, GIBS, is ranked No.1 on the continent in some rankings.

**We will put in place strategies to take our research performance to the next level by sustaining the high-quality research we currently do, improving the quality of research in more areas and supporting new emerging areas. Four things are core to the strategies: innovative research ideas, leading, emerging and a new generation of researchers, partnerships and collaborations and world class infrastructure.**

**Our future research directions lie in pursuing more inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary research to solve Africa's challenges. Collaborations will focus on joint research on African**

**issues, co-authorships and staff/student exchanges. We will be making strategic appointments to increase the proportion of distinguished international academics, recruit more post-graduate students and increase post-doctoral fellows from 253 to 500. These strategies will increase high-quality research output and nurture the next generation of researchers.**

**We will be raising resources to get world-class infrastructure to enable us to do the kinds of research our peers from the industrialized countries of the North take for granted.**

**UP has three new entities and one not so new that are examples of the scale of our ambitions to improve the quality of our research, as well advance excellence in teaching and engagement that matter to Africa's futures.**

The three new entities are characterised by a scale and investment, which are most probably a first in Africa. The aim is to achieve the critical mass that is needed to pursue knowledge creation necessary for sustainable development in Africa. It is well worth noting at this point that UP hosts the national hub for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Central to the approach is team-based research, solutions-orientated transdisciplinary endeavours. The entities are the Future Africa Institute and Campus, The Javett UP Art Centre, the Engineering 4.0 Facility and The Mamelodi Campus (or Social Innovation Space and Campus) and the project called the Mamelodi Collaborative.

#### **The Future Africa Institute and campus – game changing collaborations and partnerships**

On Friday, 29 March, we will launch the Future Africa Institute and Campus – an innovative idea and iconic eco-friendly structure - firmly pegged on the ground representing both a vision and capabilities of an African University.

Future Africa is a multi-million rand investment by UP. As a structure, it consists of a multi-purpose conference centre, accommodation for 300 single people and families, a dining hall cum dialogue space and eco-friendly gardens with edible vegetables and plant species sourced from across the continent, which are also used for experiments.

It will be the space for collaborative knowledge creation and research that matters to solving complex challenges that Africa faces and undertaken by multi-disciplinary teams from across UP, the continent and our research partners globally. In this space, the teams will collaborate, develop networking and research leadership skills, learning to communicate research to multiple publics and how to raise resources from multiple sources.

Governments and multi-lateral institutions, business, donors, civil society and international partners will be core to the team-based approach to co-create knowledge that can influence policies and decision making for Africa's development.

**NOT JUST AN IDEA** .Sitting in this room at this time are 12 early career researchers (the pioneers) coordinated by Dr Nokuthula Vilakazi working, living, learning, networking and doing research together from 8 African countries, including South Africa.

### **The Javett UP Art Centre – representing Africa’s artistic imaginary for better futures**

**THE IDEA** The Javett UP Art Centre is the result of a collaboration between the philanthropist Michael Javett’s Foundation, other donors and the University to advance interdisciplinary knowledge of the arts, art history, curation, art education, conservation and heritage preservation. The idea is to bring in more donors and recently, particularly the Dippenaar Trust, made a significant donation. The Javett UP Art Centre will have a transdisciplinary knowledge creation relationship with Future Africa among other relationships within the University, across the continent and globally. The Art Centre is in the final days of completion and will be launched on 17 September. It is meant as its strap line goes to celebrate Our Arts, Our Africa by bringing the Arts of the World to Africa, the Arts of Africa to the World. It will house the Mapungubwe Gold Collection and other gold collections that we may source.

**ART PRECINCT** It’s a museum for art exhibitions for art lovers, but it’s also much more. It is an iconic cultural artefact in and of itself, located in a space where we teach music, the visual arts, theatre and performance, architecture and design. Performances of different kinds can be held in the Centre. The creation of the Art Centre has also enabled the emergence of an Art precinct of the University that the public can access.

**BRIDGE** The Javett UP Arts, while part of the University, is also of the city and provides access from the city into the University as a way of breaking the divide between town and gown. An iconic bridge has been built over Lynwood Road as a link to the other campus. This bridge is a rich addition to the architectural landscape of our city. It is a bridge in more ways than one and symbolically speaks to the bridges our continent needs to break down barriers, including colonial borders.

**INSPIRED** The Centre will represent African creativity, ingenuity at its best and its contribution to those human endeavours that stimulate the mind to imagine a better world than that which we currently live in. Nothing feeds democratic instincts like artistic imaginaries.

### **Engineering 4.0 – participating and leading in the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial revolution**

**SMART** We are constructing the Engineering 4.0 facility, another testament to our ability to conceive and build research infrastructure to produce knowledge at the leading edge and embrace technological change. **The integrated laboratory and live traffic facility will enable the Faculty’s School of Engineering to combine its capacity in road engineering, sensor technologies and data science to further the goal of an intelligent transportation system where more economical solutions are provided for the provision, operation and maintenance of transportation infrastructure.** In this entity, we have partnered, among others, with SANRAL, the state road agency, to address critical issues of transport infrastructure necessary for development. These issues include smart transportation systems and smart cities. **Among other major research projects focused on addressing real life challenges that engineering can solve, we will be testing autonomous or driverless cars.**

## **The Mamelodi Social Innovation Space and Campus for new futures**

**IMAGINE A DIFFERENT WORLD** The fourth example is our Mamelodi Social Innovation Space, which is another dedicated campus in the township of Mamelodi with groups of academics from different disciplines working in concert, led by the Dean, Professor Nthabiseng Ogude. While it is not new, innovative developments are unfolding in this space all the time.

The Mamelodi Social Innovation Space enables access for students who do not initially earn entry to University programmes but have the potential to do so if provided with nurturing and supportive programmes. It offers enriching programmes and library/information space for learners from select schools in Mamelodi, veterinary clinical services for the community and an innovative architecture and urbanism programme that seeks to reimagine spaces planned through an apartheid logic that can be transformed to create the best environment for living, recreation and leisure. We seek to ensure that academic excellence serves a purposefulness that sustains humanity and provides hope.

**COMRADES IN ARMS** Through the Mamelodi Collaborative we are partnering with Rutgers University Newark, with support from the Kresge Foundation in the US, to make connections with similar contexts in the US and seeking to co-create knowledge that can provide imaginative and innovative solutions to student performance. **Africa's challenges after all have resonance in social contexts similar to ours. What better to do than collaborate.**

### **Revolutionaries of the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”?**

In this address, I have thus far, without directly speaking about the Fourth Industrial Revolution, alluded to how we, at UP, respond through our teaching and research agendas. **We here at UP are quiet revolutionaries of the 4IR. Universities should lead in conducting the inter- and transdisciplinary research, which will guide Africa's ability to adopt, adapt and deploy new technologies, platforms and applications effectively for sustainable and inclusive development.**

At UP we are scaling up on inter- and transdisciplinary research, as well as teaching, training and retraining for the new world of work. In **a growing number of courses, we use Artificial Intelligence and bots for teaching. We use immersive technologies and applications to teach in Mining Engineering. I have never been in a mine but I have “walked” in a mine in our Engineering 2 building – thanks to AI. We have research Chairs in AI and Machine Learning. Our library will soon deploy robots for some of its services.**

Part of our curriculum of transformation agenda is to prepare students for the changing nature of the world of work, through our work readiness and entrepreneurship programmes. These programmes impart skills that prepare students for readiness for jobs that do not yet exist. These skills include coping with change, resilience and learning how to learn and re-learn. We are also strengthening the teaching of those skills students acquire from the Humanities for which machines cannot effectively replace human capabilities,



critical thinking, nuanced understanding of cultural contexts and diversity of identities, creativity and making rigorously reasoned value judgements.

We have embraced data analytics to support different types **and forms of research across different disciplines and created new interdisciplinary fields in Data Science and Big Data, as well as appointed academics to industry-funded Chairs.**

### **Physician heal thyself**

At UP, we fully understand that we cannot seek to transform and influence society, the continent and the world if we are not a transforming institution.

Apart from the examples I mentioned earlier, our transformation agenda is focused on diversifying UP's demographic profile, the curriculum, the quality of our academic programmes, pedagogy; the quality, relevance and impact of our research and the diversification of our collaborations and partnerships to include our continent and the global South more broadly. We have a dense and growing network of collaborations across the continent. It is also equally focused on the degree to which we are responsive to and engaged with our communities at every level. **At least 23 000 students at UP are engaged in community projects or volunteering. UP is the only African University that is part of the new University Social Responsibility Network, an international group of 15 top Universities in the world.**

**DIVERSITY** Demographic diversity is growing to the extent that the majority of our students, including students in the University residences and in postgraduate studies, are black and 55% of all of our students are women. Transformation of the academic staff and senior management has been slower. Strategies to quicken diversification are in place. They include enabling programmes, affirmative action, bespoke support for career development, and training.

**At UP we are putting in place programmes that disrupt the legacies of the power dynamics that perpetuate systems of exclusion and discrimination. To maintain our credibility as a knowledge institution, we must address all of forms discrimination, harm and prejudice, including racism, sexism, all forms of gender-based harm and violence, religious intolerance, homophobia and xenophobia.**

**Our institution will, going forward, celebrate all forms of diversity, including the diversity that comes with being an African University that is firmly rooted and responsive to its South African locality.**

**To achieve genuine inclusivity, UP is setting for itself the difficult but necessary task of co-creation of new institutional cultures in the context of diversity.**

**#FEESMUSTFALL** Transformation in the current context includes addressing the financial barriers that, despite recent progress, still prevent access to quality higher education for missing middle students, student hunger and shortage of accommodation.

**The divisions that arose between students and University managements in 2015/2016 were unfortunate and most regrettable. A perpetuation of the animosity, acrimony and**

hatreds, by any means, is not in the best interest of Africa's knowledge agenda. Each institution must find, through critical reflection, ways of charting new forms of engagement on difficult issues.

**#SOLUTIONS** At UP we will seek to address the structural and institutional culture issues to the fullest extent we can, because financial need should not be a barrier to those who are academically gifted. Creating a sustainable fund for student needs is high on our priority for generating additional and more resources. We will also work with our colleagues in the academic sector, government (s), philanthropists and the private sector to find the best and most appropriate sustainable models and modes of funding students in South Africa and across the continent. Indeed also funding higher education more generally. **#WALK4SUCCESS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW. CAPE TOWN TO PRETORIA. STUDENTDRIVEN INITIATIVE.**

We also seek to actively own and pursue a transformative social justice agenda that strengthens the influence of the University as an agent of and advocate for social change.

#### **Enable a holistic, enriching student life experience**

The University, in its efforts to produce well-educated and -trained students who can become successful professionals in their chosen careers or fields of endeavour, will create an environment that is enabling, nurturing and enriching. **A rich student life develops leadership abilities, social responsibility, readiness for the world of work and the ability to operate in diverse contexts, both locally and globally.**

The University will encourage activities that build active citizenship for example, participation in clubs and societies, participation in professional associations and networks, pursuing hobbies, giving to charity. We will discourage ethnic, narrow political and exclusively race-based associations.

#### **Leverage our excellence in sport to become an African sporting powerhouse -**

**DIFFERENTIATOR** We aim to be a sporting powerhouse in Africa. In 2018, the University of Pretoria's TuksSport won four of the Varsity Sports competitions, in the process ensuring Tuks's dominance as the overall champions for the second consecutive year. **The University seeks to graduate students who are well-rounded by promoting sport as an integral element of intellectual, physical and mental well-being.**

**To realise the ambition to be a sporting powerhouse on the continent, the University will sustain its high-performance sports facilities and develop world class sports infrastructure.** We will intensify and refine programmes to identify school learners from an early age, who can be admitted to TuksSport High School.

#### **Be financially sustainable**

The University will seek, all things being equal, to **improve its financial health to ensure that the academic project is sustainable for the long term.** Dependence on government subsidies and tuition fees is a risk in the short to medium term given low economic growth and

competing priorities. **The University has to generate additional and more income beyond these sources.**

To this end, the **University will craft an advancement strategy focused on friend raising and fundraising for infrastructure for teaching, learning and research, academic and student talent and innovative research programmes, from alumni, foundations and trusts, corporations, philanthropists and wealthy individuals.**

We will re-double our efforts to commercialise some of our research, provide consulting services to clients in the public, private and social sectors and offer short courses to satisfy the need for continuous education and skills upgrade across the continent, leveraging our locational advantage.

### **Recognising the value of our staff**

The University of Pretoria will achieve its vision to be a transformative agent of Africa's futures by valuing all its staff members. A gardener, a security guard, a secretary and a cleaner at UP all make a contribution to the academic project. We will invest in their value through career-development programmes, sustainable remuneration practices, harmonious labour relations, health and wellness programmes and promoting collegiality, empathy and humanness.

Finally, Mr Chancellor, Ladies and Gentleman, in a nutshell my vision for the University of Pretoria is that it:

Transforms lives

Transforms communities and sectors

Transforms South Africa as a nation and a society

Transforms our continent, Africa

And makes a significant contribution to changing the world

I thank everyone who has made it possible for me to be the 1<sup>st</sup> African and 13<sup>th</sup> Vice-Chancellor and Principal and of the University of Pretoria. I thank my late father William Kupe, my mother and first teacher, Mrs. Ntihila Kupe, my teachers and lecturers who taught me all the way to the PhD, family and friends across the globe. To my children Tino, Uyapo and Marang, through education may you find your mission in life. Thank you to the UP Community for the warm welcome and support. Together, let us decisively transform South Africa and Africa's futures.