

## CHAPTER TWO

### Describing the context

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will attempt to contextualise academics' responses to policy change at UWC by describing the process and nature of change at the university in the post-apartheid era. I will argue that, in the face of tremendous external and internal pressures, UWC has made particular transformation choices which have had a substantial and possibly irreversible impact on the university's academic projects.

I use Weiler's (2005) notion of ambivalence to structure an explanation for the tensions and contradictions, discontinuities and inconsistencies which have come to characterise the university's response to society and the state, as well as to the national and the global economy. This chapter constructs a narrative of institutional responses to these multiple pressures and stimuli. It examines both the planned and unintended consequences of the choices made by the university as it traverses this minefield of higher education transformation in post-apartheid South Africa.

I examine the institution's history in brief, in an effort to account for and explain the position the university has taken with regard to policy implementation, namely one of enthusiastic compliance and responsiveness. I will also examine the dilemma facing UWC, caught in a trap of responsiveness: building on its historical context, which is the source of its unique identity, while trying to disentangle itself from its past in order to carve a new identity as a world-class institution able to compete with any university in the country or in the world. It faces the future with a great deal of ambivalence relating to its transition towards an entrepreneurial university - constantly looking forward, pursuing aspirational goals, but often at the expense of attending to pressing and present challenges.

## 2.2. Introducing change at UWC

Explaining change at UWC calls first of all for an understanding of the developing relationship between the post-apartheid state and the higher education sector. This involves implementing the application of three major steering mechanisms, namely *planning, finance and quality*. Higher education policy has repeatedly articulated the role of these three levers in directing responsiveness to policy goals and objectives, as well as their interrelatedness, as a trio of control and surveillance, in guiding and propelling the sector in the appropriate direction.

The choices made by UWC in this context of state steering and control must be understood within the convergence and interplay between external and internal factors, between history and present imperatives. Together these bring into existence what I have termed an institutional propensity for compliance, a disposition to responsiveness.

The significance of this institutional inclination is best appreciated when one considers the fact that many higher education institutions across the globe and more particularly in South Africa, have approached policy implementation in different ways, choosing either to ignore state imperatives and face the consequences, or to comply formally and minimally, simply because it is required and/or is too costly to resist.

UWC, in contrast, has chosen to engage whole-heartedly and enthusiastically with policy objectives, a zeal which often overtakes the state's expected rate of change. Overzealous responsiveness has propelled the university along the path towards becoming an entrepreneurial university. In its quest to become an institution of exceptional quality, it has moved at a breathless pace that many internal stakeholders, most notably the academics, have been unable, and often ideologically unwilling, to match.

Becoming an entrepreneurial university engaged in market-related activities has also thrown into sharp relief UWC's identification as a historically black university (HBU) and historically disadvantaged institution (HDI), serving the poor and responsive to the needs of disadvantaged communities - the institution's *raison d'être* in the past and arguably still today.

Fundamentally, UWC's essential identity as an HBU/HDI has come up against its new construction of itself. The new trajectory and the past identity are inimical to each other. As in

Muller's contradictory couplings (2003), 'market' university and HBU are in direct opposition. Attempts to balance the two in order to do justice to both market and community; entrepreneurialism and development, engender ambivalence, inconsistencies and internal contestation.

## **2. 3. A History of South Africa's HBUs**

### **2. 3.1. Apartheid creations**

UWC was established in 1959 by the apartheid state, for people classified 'coloured', and was located 25 km outside the urban centre of Cape Town. All higher education institutions for black students during apartheid were labeled Bush Colleges, and UWC's location was also credited with earning it the title of Bush College. With sandy flatland on one side and dense bush immediately surrounding it, UWC was located in a desolate segment of land designated a 'Coloured growth area' by the Nationalist government. In 1960, 166 coloured students enrolled there, and were offered 'limited training for lower to middle level positions in schools, the civil service and other institutions designed to serve a separate coloured community' (*extract from the university's webpage from a section entitled 'Proud History'*).

Higher education was racially structured, with universities for different racial groups serving distinctly different purposes. This was in line with the goals and strategies of the apartheid state with regard to education. The historically white universities (HWUs) of the time provided a liberal type of education across all disciplines and professions. They served the enfranchised population well, a sign of which was sturdy financial investment by alumni in their Alma Maters during the apartheid years and beyond. The extent of resource provision by the state was reflected in their infrastructure, outward appearance, prime location and the salaries paid to their academic staff.

Universities for the disenfranchised – classified as black, coloured and Indian – were located in the rural Bantustans or in urban dumping grounds far from city amenities.

Designed to offer limited programmes, their under-resourcing resulted in poor infrastructure and a physical appearance hardly befitting a higher education institution. These universities, today termed historically black institutions, served the needs of the disenfranchised as determined by the apartheid planners.

Wolpe (1995) has argued that differences between these HWUs and HBUs were to be found in the varied '*functions assigned to them in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid order.*' In other words, white institutions were meant to cultivate privilege while black universities were tasked with the production of semi-skilled workers and the constrained professional development of a black middle class. This was in line with apartheid education's goal of limiting black economic involvement to little more than 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' (Verwoerd, 1953, quoted in the Afrikaans newspaper Die Burger).

The intention was that the educated black middle class would occupy lower and middle level administrative positions in the civil service of the independent homelands, or bantustans, while the coloured and Indian middle class would occupy the same kinds of positions in the urban areas, serving separate development administrations. Further, professional training was limited to careers which allowed these graduates to serve their own racial groups, within the rural or urban ghettos where they lived. Consequently, the HBUs were limited to training many teachers and preachers, some social workers, lawyers and nurses (but no doctors), and many administrators. Wolpe has argued that these limitations ensured that HBU training would not threaten the 'existing racial division of labour' (Wolpe, 1995).

Enrolment in HBUs in science and technology was abysmally low, as was that for business and commerce, while most black students were filtered into education and humanities programmes, including law. As late as 1990, enrolment in the HBUs for science and technology, business and commerce, education and humanities reflected a ratio of 10:4:49:37, compared with those in English HWUs at 40:16:7:37.

Enrolments in the HBUs were concentrated at undergraduate level, while the HWUs continued to train large numbers of postgraduate students, a critical ingredient in the development of a strong institutional research base.

Research output in the period 1984-1991 was almost 37 000 units, with HBUs contributing less than 5% to this total (Wolpe, 1995). A consequence of this was felt well into the post-apartheid era, with research output dominated by aging white professors, and differences in research productivity across institutions in 2008 still reflecting earlier patterns of disadvantage and inequality.

UWC was created in this context in 1960, after the promulgation of the Extension of University Education Act of 1959. This Act euphemistically referred to extending university education to other races, when in fact it was designed to redirect students from white institutions and the independent College of Fort Hare, where many qualified before 1960, to racially inscribed locations where control could be exercised over the academic programmes offered and hence the future careers and development of disadvantaged groups.

The response of coloured people to the establishment of UWC was varied. Many exercised a pragmatic view and sent their children there to be educated, while another sector of the population expressed resistance by refusing to send their children and persuading others to boycott the institution.

The other regional higher education option was for coloured persons to enroll at the University of Cape Town, the university for white students, through an application for special permission from the state education department to attend, on the grounds that a specific course of study was not offered at UWC. The successful applicant was then granted a permit to attend, but such concessions were limited – granted to small numbers of applicants and restricted to the study of obscure courses like Comparative African Government and Law (CAGAL).

There is little historic evidence that the establishment of UWC was celebrated and embraced by the coloured population for whom it was established. On the contrary, much evidence exists to suggest that, from 1970 onwards, a decade after its inception, UWC was characterised by student resistance and struggle, which involved contestation with the early Afrikaner senior management and academic staff.

### **2.3.2. Funding the HBUs**

In order to understand the structural inequalities and disadvantages with which these institutions entered the post-apartheid era, one needs to examine the funding basis of the apartheid higher education system. White universities were funded on the basis of a funding formula, and black institutions on the basis of negotiated budgets.

In brief, the Holloway subsidy formula, which applied to white universities, funded staff remuneration, administrative costs, equipment and full-time students, according to a calculation which also accounted for student fees as a source of income (Steyn and de Villiers, 2007).

In contrast, HBU funding was in the form of negotiated budgets (Institutional profile, 2004) which involved institutional submission of needs in the form of expenditure and income. Spending was controlled according to specific line items in the budget and unspent money had to be returned to the state.

The Holloway formula, in effect, granted a greater deal of freedom to institutions regarding the way money was spent. In their analysis of the general advantages of subsidy funding, Steyn and de Villiers suggest that such funding 'does not prescribe how the allocated money is to be spent' (Steyn & de Villiers, 2007; Bundy, 2005.) suggests further that in practical terms, institutions could decide on student numbers and fees, and on staff numbers and salaries. A further advantage was that long-term planning was facilitated in that the rules of allocation were clearly spelt out, allowing for more effective institutional budgeting and the possibility of building up a reserve from unspent money.

In stark contrast, the line item expenditure budget was a symbol of control and another nail in the coffin of HBU desires for autonomy. This form of funding, which required government approval for every cent spent, removed all possibility of spending flexibility.

In particular, the insistence on the return of unspent monies '*meant that no financial reserves could be built up*' (IOP, 2004), making long-term planning for growth and development completely impossible, and providing no future security to weather tough financial times. Nor could HBUs make decisions about staff employment, student numbers, or the acquisition of research and other equipment (Bundy, 2005).

By 1988, however, HBUs and HWUs were funded according to the same subsidy formula, called SAPSE (South African Post-Secondary Education), but the initial euphoria at having achieved funding equity and financial autonomy with the HWUs was soon tempered by the realisation that uniform spending across the sector would continue to entrench inequality rather than dismantle it. The HWU's had benefitted from the Holloway formula's flexible application over an extended period of at least fifty years.

Consequently, by the time a single-formula funding framework was applied to all institutions, the infrastructural differences between the two types of institutions were glaring, especially in terms of resources such as library holdings, research equipment acquired earlier, science laboratories, and building maintenance and refurbishment.

HWUs were also able to charge and collect higher student fees while receiving substantial additional revenue from earlier investments and from long-term substantial and renewable donations and scholarships. Moreover, alumni funding kept flowing into these institutions from ex-students who after graduation were able to fill positions in the upper echelons of society and the economy. These differences are experienced to this day and remain an unfortunate legacy of apartheid higher education.

A Mathematics professor interviewed for this research explains:

*There are definitely differences between universities and it's not fair to compare just UCT and UWC. Both are located in Cape Town, but UCT attracts far more donor funds than we do and I can tell you why that is so. We at UWC were training teachers, and we trained excellent teachers and thousands of them. But teachers do not sit in big companies, so UCT was turning out the people who are now company directors, and as they say, charity begins at home. They first ensure that UCT has been properly covered before they think of giving some small change to UWC. (Interview with Albert).*

Ironically, the very policy instrument which the HBUs expected would level the playing field as far as funding was concerned turned out to be a double-edged sword, bringing instead an illusion of equality which was hard to challenge.

A Chemistry professor whom I interviewed and who had been at the institution for 35 years at the time of this research, articulated the impact of the shift from negotiated budgets to formula funding for UWC:

*Before 1984 the state gave UWC a fixed amount of money which was based on the number of students and staff, and which was pretty royal. The fees students paid before 1984 went into a separate fund and we couldn't touch that money, it was given back to the state. Then the university authorities here indicated to the state that they didn't like this treatment and wanted to be funded as all other universities were at that stage. So after 1984 we got funded as all other institutions and our revenue fell like a brick. Our students didn't pay their fees because they saw UWC as an extension of the government, which it wasn't really. We were pretty independent at that stage. But we now got the same amount of money as the white universities...and the rest of the money we had to raise from student fees, investments and donations.*

*And of course we couldn't do that. The other institutions had a legacy of people who have made donations over the years and they had huge amounts of money invested that they could draw on. Their fees were also higher than ours, and people could pay. So we went into a bit of a negative decline as far as our funds were concerned, and students didn't pay fees, so we had huge debts which we had to carry along year after year. (From Igor's interview).*

In a paper describing the history of higher education funding, Bunting (2002) sheds more light on the financial decline following the 1988 extension of the SAPSE formula to black universities, to which Igor alluded.

## **2. 4. The History of UWC**

### **2.4.1. Political struggle in the 1970's and 80's**

The first decade of UWC's establishment proceeded fairly uneventfully, with a conservative Afrikaner rector supportive of the ruling Nationalist party, Afrikaner academic staff, and a state-picked council presiding over its affairs. In 1970 the institution was granted university status, meaning that it was able to award its own degrees.

Fifteen years after its establishment, the first black rector was inaugurated, a consequence it appears of continued student protest against the conservative white university management. Despite the institution's autonomous status and the change in leadership, the university Council, the ultimate decision-making body, continued to be staffed by the state with appointments aimed at the continued exercise of control over the activities of the university.

1970 also heralded the start of struggles to come. A student was sent out of a lecture for refusing to wear a tie, and in the first ever confrontation, students burned a tie in protest (HSF, 1999). In 1973, students protested against the University's refusal to recognise a draft constitution drawn up two years earlier because it was not aligned with the provisions of the Extension of Universities Act. (Lalu, 1999) and protestors bore a poster entitled "*White Arrogance leads to Black Frustration*". Two years later, in 1975, the campus erupted in a mass confrontation which began as a protest against the quality of food. In response, and as a placatory measure, the state appointed the first coloured rector at UWC. Mounting student dissatisfaction grew to reflect the national wave of protest, with discontent against the apartheid government gathering momentum all over the country.

By 1976, at the time of the Soweto uprising and the start of student-led mass action, students at UWC were ideologically prepared to join this mass student movement.

The growth of the Black Consciousness Movement at UWC has been adequately documented by Anderson (2002, 2003), as a critical force in conscientising students against apartheid oppression. It served also to unite oppressed racial groups, black, coloured and Indian, around the concepts of blackness and resistance. Student protest escalated as students became radicalised and a new site for anti-apartheid struggle emerged from the foundations of the 'Bush College', originally established to serve the human capital needs of coloured separate development.

A marked feature of this era was that both students and significant sectors of black staff were united in protest, both against the apartheid state and against the institution in so far as it was serving the separate development interests of the government. Furthermore, the more radical future leadership of UWC was to be drawn from the ranks of this student-staff anti-apartheid alliance of the late 1970's and 80's.

Within this volatile climate of resistance against the intentions of the apartheid state, radical academics, many of them students in the era described above, were able to pass a motion in the university's Senate in 1982 which clearly and unambiguously rejected the state's 'politico-ideological' foundations for the establishment of this particular HBU.

A new mission was crafted by the Senate which asserted the institution's role in social development and upliftment, and crucially, in an act of explicit defiance against the state, declared the university open to students of all races.

The new mission statement pronounced indisputably that the institution had entered into a new era in terms of its vision of its own purpose and its role in serving the disenfranchised and disadvantaged. A number of elements of this mission statement are worth elaborating on here.

Several broad themes characterised this sense of purpose. Firstly, flying in the face of its establishment to serve one ethnic group, the new mission declared the university open to all races.

An earlier decree had served to open admissions on academic grounds, but kept entry requirements low by declaring that UWC was ‘a university which opened its doors to all who fulfilled the minimum qualifications.’ The new 1982 mission, however, declared that the ‘doors of learning shall be open’ to all races who qualified, and re-inscribed the earlier policy of keeping fees low to enable access for working-class students.

Secondly, the mission declared open admissions on academic grounds as well. Henceforth, all students meeting minimum admissions criteria, namely a pass at Matric or school-leaving level, would be accepted at UWC. And thirdly, the university declared its commitment to social and community development and upliftment, using the term ‘Third World’ to indicate that its notion of community included local communities of disenfranchised and disadvantaged people.

Through this seminal act, UWC became associated with broadening access and participation to include the poor, all races, and those badly served by the apartheid schooling system.

#### **2.4.2. Becoming an Access institution**

Between 1983 and 1984, student numbers at UWC grew from 4 885 to 6 125. Six years later, in 1990, the numbers had doubled to 12 473, under the radical leadership of Professor Jakes Gerwel. An ex-UWC student himself, he had been appointed as Rector in 1985. His role would be to implement the 1982 mission and transform the Bush College into an ‘Intellectual Home for the Left’.

The ‘Intellectual Home for the Left’ was so called because of Gerwel’s deliberate recruitment of radical thinkers and political activists onto his academic staff. This was in keeping with his own commitment to positioning the institution as a key driver of political change in the province, as evidenced in the following extract from his 1987 inaugural address.

*I am from a younger generation with a good dose of Marxism as critical paradigm.. I come from a generation which says that politics always plays a role; academe and the university also have a real role to bring about political change...I am becoming rector at a time when the crisis of authority, the crisis of validity - some people call it the crisis of legitimacy - of the state and the government is not any longer just a theoretical construction but is written in huge letters in every house, every school and every university. (Gerwel, 1987).*

The story of UWC is one of political struggle, of flaunting apartheid legislation through its commitment to bringing about political change. The university marked up to its credit key achievements in the anti-apartheid struggle through its promotion of People's Education, through its recruitment of openly radical academics. These comprised a cadre of intellectual activists, some of whom still remain, and many of whom used their position in the institution to research and formulate future policy for the new state.

Not surprisingly, many alumni and academics from UWC were drawn into the ranks of power in the new South African state; indeed, some critics have gone so far as to argue that UWC deliberately positioned itself as an intellectual home for the left and a site of struggle to secure for its alumni and staff positions of power in the new government (Neville Alexander, 1988).

The story of UWC also includes an early attempt at widening access and increasing participation of African students in the higher education sector – an achievement which was to become a key policy goal of the new post-apartheid state. In 1986, 400 African students were registered; by 1992, 4 308 African students constituted almost 50% of the student body at UWC.

Running parallel to this successful story of equity achievement, inclusion and transformation of the student profile, is a bitter narrative concerning access. This incorporates both the impact of rising student debt on a situation of increasing and chronic financial insecurity and the consequences for academic quality of the commitment to accepting large numbers of academically weak and under-prepared students, themselves a product of an appallingly under-resourced schooling system for blacks.

### **2.4.3 The state's response to resistance**

By 1987, the university's relationship with the apartheid state was clear and unambiguous: it would continue vigorously to resist the state's intentions and control, and would henceforth officially align itself with the anti-apartheid movement. However, the decision in the late 1980's and beyond to continue to oppose the apartheid state has been framed by Anderson (2002) as a somewhat irresponsible and reckless act.

Anderson (2002) argued that UWC could ill afford to 'bite the hand that fed it,' dependent as it was on state funding. When the state retaliated, it did so by wielding the most potent weapon of all – financial support.

In 1987, as more African students sought admission to UWC following its open admissions policy, the state declared funding levels to be frozen at 1986 enrolment levels, an act which effectively paralysed student growth. Those institutions which agreed to 'open their doors' to the increasing numbers of young black people who demanded entry were severely chastised and experienced immense financial losses as a result of the state's action. The message was unequivocal: universities that wished to engage in this form of defiance did so at their own peril.

UWC's funding statistics for 1988 tell a story of strong state political retaliation. In that year, its student enrollment rose to equal 88% of the enrolment at UCT and 86% of that at Stellenbosch University. At the same time, UWC received from the state 36% of the funding allocated to UCT and 37% of the funding to Stellenbosch - a statistically crude but powerful indicator of the consequences to UWC of 'biting the hand that fed it.'

The open admissions policy was aimed also at allowing access to students from low income groups. However, no plan was put in place to augment the university's income to offset these students' inability to pay fees, which were already reduced to unsustainably low levels. The failure to confront the issue of unpaid student fees or to create a financial system to collect student debt, thrust the institution into a state of 'chronic financial instability,' exacerbated by its inability to access funding from third stream sources.

In 1988, UWC sued a local newspaper for alleging that student debt amounted to more than R17 million, proving in court that, by the time the case appeared before a judge, this figure was nearer R5 million. By 1992, however, student debt had indeed reached the R16-million mark.

An article in the Financial Mail for 26 May 2000 quoted UWC's financial director at the time as saying that in 1997 the university had 'hit the wall' financially, with student debt having escalated to more than R83 million. By the time the state came to UWC's aid in 2003, the R127 million rescue was timely but provided little more than was needed to clear UWC's debt to the bank. By 2004, the university's bank overdraft alone amounted to R142 million.

By the time of the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, UWC had experienced relative success, in terms of good quality leadership, the avoidance of total financial collapse, and its ability to maintain a reputation for academic work of a fairly high quality.

In 1996, Nelson Mandela lavished praise on UWC for its role in the political struggle and for maintaining the quality of its academic work through a period of turbulence. He conferred on UWC the status of ‘proud national asset,’ a description which would be recalled many times in later years by those called upon to make an argument for the university’s continued existence, when it faced merger or closure.

Addressing the audience at the inauguration of a new rector in 1996, Mandela said:

*In every sphere of society, UWC students and staff from every section of our population are to be found. And if on travels to neighbouring Namibia, the story is repeated. It is indeed an institution that has attracted and produced men and women of the highest quality.*

*UWC was a model in ways far beyond its immediate concerns. The nation drew inspiration from its defiant transformation of itself from an apartheid ethnic institution into a proud national asset; from its concrete and manifest concern for the poor, for working people, for women and rural communities; and from its readiness to grapple with the kind of problems that a free and democratic South Africa was to deal with later.*

Despite these relative successes, UWC continued to struggle in comparison to the HWUs. In a 1990 study, it was found that the two neighbouring HWUs outperformed UWC on a number of quality criteria relating to research publications, research funding, the number of graduate students and research centres, and the numbers of staff with doctoral degrees, prompting the conclusion that UWC lacked the capacity to contribute to the scientific and technological development of a new South Africa (Jansen, 1991, quoted in Switzer, 1998).

## **2.5. Explaining change at UWC**

### **2.5.1 Changing student profile**

By 1997, there was clear evidence that UWC was in a state of financial decline. Student debt had escalated, and the University’s debt recovery system was dysfunctional. Tough measures were put in place in an effort to regain control of the situation. Student protest escalated as up-front payments were demanded for the first time at registration. Students who were unable to pay, or who had not met promotion requirements, were excluded from registration.

Those who owed the university money were not allowed to graduate. As a result, a steady decline in student numbers was witnessed at UWC, at a time when the university sector was otherwise experiencing a surge in student enrolments.

Student numbers grew by 33% overall in the higher education sector in the period 1994-1998, while UWC experienced a 36.5% loss in student numbers in the period 1995-1999. In 1995, student enrolment was at a high of 14 890, but in 1999, only 9 453 students were enrolled.

In particular, the statistics indicate a remarkable drop in numbers between 1998 (11 537) and 1999 (9 453).

Student numbers at South Africa's HBUs declined as students gained access in the post-apartheid era to universities which had previously been closed to them.

Within this context of falling student numbers and financial decline, 42 academics were retrenched with effect January 1999 from the University, without prior warning. In September 1998, the Rector had given academics the assurance that there would be no job losses, but only three days later, as student numbers dropped below what management regarded as viable levels, academics from a number of faculties were retrenched.

Demoralisation of students and staff set in as the university appeared to be teetering on the brink of collapse. Data from this study reveal that this period of loss and demoralisation had a significant impact on institutional memory, with academics many years later still experiencing tremendous anxiety and consternation over student numbers, coupled with a clear institutional obsession with counting and accounting for student FTEs (full-time equivalents).

Another significant trend in enrolment statistics indicates shifting enrolment ratios between African and coloured students. African student numbers grew from 27% of the student total in 1990 to 50% of total enrolment in 1995. This was in response to the 1987 strategy of open admissions to all races. However, by 2000, when student numbers were in decline, African enrolments accounted for 67% of the total, and by 2005, African students represented just one third of student enrolments (33%).

The phenomenon of declining African enrolment oddly coincided with a period when the university was in a state of recovery following the appointment of a new rector in 2001.

In an interview, this Rector spoke eloquently of the need to 'win back' certain aspects of the university's identity. Winning back students was one aim, but he also referred to winning staff over and out of a period of demoralisation. From 2001, numbers started climbing, reaching a high of 14 580 in 2005; this was no doubt taken by the leadership as a sign of public confidence in the university's academic status. It was clear that coloured students were returning to UWC, reversing an earlier trend of loss of this segment to other regional universities and technikons, but at the same time a significant loss of African students was experienced.

In a rather pragmatic approach to dealing with the problem, UWC's 2007 Annual Report explained that African numbers fell as a result of the '*normalisation of the university system, the effect of poorer schooling and the recovery of coloured enrolment,*' and noted further that '*the proportion of African enrolment in 2007 (36%) remains considerably higher than the proportion of Africans in the Western Cape.*'

The rather uncritical acceptance of this phenomenon often came up against stronger equity concerns. These were raised by academic staff interviewed for this research who regard the decline in African enrolment as a significant loss to the university, representative of an unfortunate departure from an earlier mission of serving the poor and disadvantaged. Clearly, increasing student fees (8% increase in 2006) and enforcing higher admission requirements affected steady financial recovery and an assumed increase in the quality of the student intake, but it also served to undermine the foundations of the institution's famous 1987 mission and its unique historical identity in promoting access and equity.

This has come to represent one of the major areas of contestation and ambivalence in the university, where the demands of marketisation and commercialisation have come up against the need for equity, redress, social development and upliftment. The management of UWC proudly proclaims the diversity of the student body, pointing out that it is no longer largely poor and under-prepared.

Sections of its academic community, however, view that specific transformation of the student body as a loss, and a signal that the traditional values and mission of the university have lost ground to the advances made by the new 'market' university.

Not only has there been a shift away from majority African enrolment but a movement can also be discerned away from serving poorer students. Official data from the Department of Education indicates that in 2000 a total of 31% of UWC students qualified for and received NSFAS funding, but that by 2005 only 19% of the students received this form of state financial assistance, with 81% not applying for such assistance.

This does suggest that a greater proportion of UWC students in 2005 (81%) were financing their own studies than in 2000 (69%). The state uses this ratio, of the proportion of students receiving state aid, as a proxy for the number of disadvantaged students enrolled at a specific university, and then proceeds to calculate the type and amount of academic support the university has to provide to ensure reasonable success rates in the light of financial aid statistics (CHE Profile of UWC for audit).

One inference that can be drawn from the statistics on student financial aid is that UWC is slowly abandoning its mission of service to the poor and disadvantaged, and is increasingly moving beyond the reach of the working class through higher student fees, more efficient student debt collection and the exercise of more rigorous entry requirements. Yet, despite the apparent decline in the overall disadvantage factor, the research data point to strong academic perceptions of large numbers of (academically and financially) struggling students, while UWC management have begun to construct new descriptions of the UWC student profile which reflect the changes discussed above in the disadvantage factor.

### **2.5.2 Changing enrolment patterns**

In considering change at UWC over the years 2000-2005, I am struck by the extent to which the university has very rapidly responded to demands from the state for the reconfiguration of the university system.

Nowhere is this more striking than in the advances UWC has made towards achieving national benchmarks related to the accelerated pursuit of knowledge creation in the sciences. To this end, UWC's enrolment patterns have shifted dramatically since 2000, when 22% of its students were enrolled in the areas of science and technology, to 31% in 2005.

This has required a concomitant shift away from education enrolment, assisted by the removal of state teacher bursaries and a general negative perception of the attractiveness of the teaching profession, as well as away from enrolments in human and social sciences.

The following table demonstrates these changes:

**TABLE 2.1: Changing enrolment patterns as a percentage of total enrolments**

<b>Fields</b>	<b>HE system in 1994</b>	<b>HE system in 2000</b>	<b>NPHE targets 2001</b>	<b>UWC 1995</b>	<b>UWC 2000</b>	<b>UWC 2005</b>	<b>2010 DoE targets for UWC</b>	<b>CHE 2003 benchmarks</b>
<b>Science, engineering, technology</b>	25	24	30	14	22	31	36	30
<b>Business, commerce, management</b>	25	26	30	9	13	15	14	15
<b>Humanities and social sciences and education</b>	50	49	40	76	66	54	50	45

The benefits accruing from state differential subsidy of different fields act as a critical source of motivation for change and compliance, especially when one considers that UWC has always depended for its financial stability on a combination of state subsidy and student fees. Its own financial analysis, presented in 2009 at a workshop for UWC executive managers and Deans, indicates that, at that point in time, the most critical variables were, firstly, staff salaries; secondly, the bank overdraft rate; thirdly, state subsidy; and, fourthly, student fees. Any changes in these factors would have a critical impact on the university's financial situation.

Changing enrolment patterns in the higher education system, including universities and technikons, was regarded by the state as a critical means of reconfiguring the sector to contribute to national social and economic reconstruction.

Bunting (2002), notes that the earlier NCHE had set two conditions for the transformation of the sector. One was increasing participation in higher education and the other was *'improving the responsiveness of the higher education system to deliver the research, knowledge and highly trained people required for South Africa to compete in a rapidly changing international context.'* The White Paper subsequently took up this recommendation as a responsiveness goal, indicating that *'career-oriented programmes must be expanded, particularly in science and technology.'*

The NPHE set specific targets for enrolment, as shown in the table, and the new funding framework would lever enrolment change by providing differentiated subsidies in what were now referred to as Classification of Education Subject Matter (CESM) categories. CESM categories group disciplines into four areas, with the funding formula allocating different levels of support to each category. Education, law and psychology, for example, fall under CESM Category 1, earning one unit of subsidy, while life, physical and health sciences fall under Category 4 and earn four units of subsidy.

The shift towards science is one which is embraced wholeheartedly by senior management at UWC, who regard this as a major achievement and a proud symbol of the transition the university has made 'from HBU to excellence.'

Table 2.1 shows that by 2000, UWC had already initiated change in enrolment patterns in response to early policy (NCHE and the White Paper), well before the NPHE invoked specific targets and levers to facilitate policy implementation. By 2003, UWC had exceeded NPHE recommendations and by 2005 was well on the way to meeting the new and revised CHE performance indicators for measuring 'well-functioning' universities.

The research data will show the impact of these shifts on quality and the academic project. The varied responses of academics to these new demands for compliance initiated by UWC will indicate the ambivalence with which they regard the university's overzealous response to transformation signals emanating from the state.

It is clear that UWC has embraced higher education policy goals, and has made extraordinary efforts to meet and exceed the targets set by the state. Jansen et al (2007) have argued for the multiplicity of factors impacting institutional change and policy implementation, explaining that:

*Institutional change bows neither to central planning, nor market forces; it yields neither to global pressures nor local realities; it responds neither to institutional inertia nor external pressures. Rather, higher education change, whether planned or incidental, takes its pace and direction from the interaction among these variables, shaped by particular institutional contexts (Jansen et al 2007).*

This is indeed the case for UWC, and I will argue that it was the interplay amongst a host of factors that created within this university a propensity for responsiveness, an inclination for compliance.

First amongst these factors is the history and context of the university itself, as a forerunner in democratising participation in higher education, declaring its doors open to all races and to those ill-prepared for university by the schooling system. These values, tied to a mission of social development and service to the disadvantaged communities from which the students hailed, have carved an institutional identity closely associated with the notion of a socially-useful university. And it is this precise value that is embedded in the principles of massification, democratic participation, equity, redress and relevance that have guided state reforms towards transforming higher education in South Africa.

The critical dimension impacting the rate of change and the degree of compliance is precisely the neat correspondence and overlap between the social and political values developed in the context of the anti-apartheid struggle at UWC and the current principles guiding state-directed change. In short, UWC has not been expected to behave much differently in accordance with the fundamental principles and values underpinning higher education transformation.

Ramirez (2005) argues that universities globally are changing, in response to shared and networked values, in the direction of greater inclusiveness and usefulness. Scharpf (1987) was quoted by Muller (2003) in developing an argument to explain the varied degree of institutional responsiveness to demands for change, claiming that:

*Institutional theory shows that organisations are easier to influence from without only when the outside signals correspond to their internal criteria of, and learnt capacities for, relevance. When the external signals go against these, they become highly resistant: they are able to 'ignore control signals, to forego incentives, and to absorb sanctions, without changing their ways in the direction desired by government policy makers' (Scharpf 1987).*

Together these theorists support the explanation for change outlined above, namely that where there exists a strong correspondence between institutional values and those embedded in state policy, change is likely to happen more rapidly and in the direction required by policy.

A second explanation for the keen responsiveness of UWC to state demands is a more pragmatic one. Simply put, the harsh consequences of 'biting the hand that feeds it' is, arguably, strongly inscribed in UWC's institutional memory, dating back to the punitive financial measures taken by the apartheid state against the university's show of resistance in declaring itself open to all races.

My investigation into UWC's financial records (2007-2009) indicates that state funding, through subsidy and additional funds it has managed to attract for specific activities and projects, accounts for almost 50% of the university's operational budget, and that any change in the portion of its budget sourced from the state will have a dramatic impact on sustainability. Concerted attempts have been made to attract more third stream income to the university, and these have undeniably been successful, but private income will not sustain the university's operations. An example is the newly-constructed Life Sciences building. A symbol of UWC's recent success in attracting donor funds, it is a world-class facility costing R440 million. Atlantic Philanthropies, a keen supporter of UWC's mission, donated the sizable amount of R132 million for this single project, yet the Department of Education's pledge of R220 million serves as stark reminder that the university will continue to rely largely on state funding for its sustainability.

Interestingly, the CHE, in a research report entitled *Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and the Corporatised University in Contemporary South Africa*, contributed to a debate sparked by accusations by prominent academics in South Africa (Jansen, 2004; Bundy, 2005) about the steady erosion of academic freedom in the post-apartheid state, by arguing that:

*State financing of the higher education system enhances the power of state bureaucrats and political élites. While public funding inevitably comprises a sizable component of the university system, it is important that higher education managers open up other income streams (apart from student fees) to support their institutions' activities and that this is seen as an opportunity, where necessary, to speak with an independent voice (CHE, 2006: 26).*

This view echoes the argument made by Slaughter and Leslie (2006) on the need for universities to become less dependent on state funding:

*For all universities worldwide, the balance must come from the private sector, pushing universities inexorably into 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997) and multiple stakeholder contracts, and away from the singular influence of the state.*

It is apparent that change at UWC can be explained with reference to a combination of factors. Excessive reliance on state funding, the difficult road to building private income, correspondence between values and learnt capacities for social transformation and relevance, and the painful memory of state retaliation against non-compliance have together created a type of institutional response that is extreme and overzealous. Indeed, it surpasses traditional notions of compliance embedded in the literature on institutional change, notions such as formal compliance (Jansen et al, 2007), and swimming or coping (Trowler, 1997).

## **2.6. The transition: 'Moving UWC from HBU to excellence'**

### **2.6.1 Understanding the transition**

UWC, at the time of this study, was an institution in transition, from an HBU with a strong community-orientation in its mission and work, to a 'market' university eager to enter the race towards entrepreneurialism, and to compete with the best, not only in the traditional areas of teaching and research but also in new areas of innovation and commercialisation.

In the oft-repeated words from the Rector at the time (2008), this transition required 'moving UWC from HBU to excellence' within a strategy designed to create a 'modern learning culture,' in which UWC would be a symbol of the 'achievement of greatness' and a signifier to the international community that 'immense possibilities exist in all spheres in South Africa.'

Equally important, in the post-apartheid era, was that its relationship with the state would change, from an adversarial one, continuously and deeply challenging policy designed to shape universities into entities serving the state, to a relationship of enthusiastic compliance and zealous pursuit of the state's goals and objectives for transformation.

In this section, I will argue that the defining moment, one signaling a dramatic change in this particular university's relationship with the state, was when UWC was able to persuade government that it should remain an independent university, and that it should not suffer the fate of a merger with a technikon in its region.

This was at a time when public perception was united against historically black universities; and no doubt some HBUs at the post-apartheid moment did not do justice to the title of university (Jansen, 2004).

The 2002 draft report of the National Working Group on restructuring the higher education sector recommended the merger of UWC with a neighbouring technikon. The university's management was determined to overturn the recommendation. It eventually achieved this by engaging with government on the basis of, firstly, the university's reputation as an institution which had played a key role in the anti-apartheid struggle, challenging the apartheid government ideologically and physically, and, secondly, as an HDI which had managed to maintain a fairly strong academic reputation despite these struggles.

I quote a senior institutional manager who describes UWC's engagement with the state on this matter as a strategy of contestation aimed at forcing the state to acknowledge and reward the university's contribution to political change:

*We began to speak to ministers, to talk about this university and how brave it was in struggle, how it was still up to then. How it had produced more black graduates than any other university. How there was incredible potential here. How there were already pockets of scientific endeavour developing which were equal to the best in this country. And for them not to acknowledge that and to destroy that history is to interfere dramatically within an almost aspirational trajectory. We had aspired to be free and had worked assiduously to be free. Now, or given what's inside this university, there's a possibility that it can aspire now to deal with the next set of freedom challenges, the knowledge challenge. For us, that is the fundamental next set of freedom challenges. And for them to cut this short is to destroy the one university who because of its history can with integrity be fore-grounded as aspirational (From Interview with Thabo).*

On June 4, 2002, the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, himself a Professor of Human Rights at UWC during the period 1990-1994, at the height of the apartheid struggle, responded to a question in Parliament as follows:

*Mr Ebrahim asked why the University of the Western Cape (UWC) was not merged with Peninsula Technikon (Pentech) as it was initially proposed.*

*The Minister explained that there had been many impressive institutional changes and positive academic developments at UWC that made it unwise to merge it with Pentech (Parliamentary Monitoring Group <http://www.pmg.org.za>).*

In return for escaping the fate of a merger, UWC had to demonstrate its viability into the twenty-first century, meaning essentially its viability as a market university. With this assurance, it was granted 170 million rands in recapitalisation funding; this was to meet the costs of the incorporation of the University of Stellenbosch's Faculty of Dentistry and of housing a shared regional nursing platform, as well as to redress past inequalities and place the university on a more secure financial footing.

This successful engagement with the state ensured UWC's continued survival. As a consequence, however, it had produced a single-minded determination on the part of institutional management to be seen to measure up to the best universities in South Africa, and, as a corollary, finally and unquestionably to bury the label of inferiority associated with its status as a historically disadvantaged and historically black university. Importantly, that success would signal a change in UWC's relationship with the state. In its zeal to prove its worth as a viable independent university, it would participate enthusiastically in all of the state's plans and goals for transformation. Contestation would become a thing of the past, and a new relationship with the state would emerge, with UWC as the leading partner in higher education transformation, serving the needs of the post-apartheid state and economy enthusiastically, often uncritically.

A senior manager described the new relationship between the state and UWC in 2008 as follows:

*The relationship's been very respectful. It's not one of tension and conflict. But it's also saying something about civility and a respectful approach and understanding that there was a time when the battle was fought as a battle and you had to go to war. I think it's understanding that in the new environment the state is not the enemy and the state is part of society... in a sense of the triple helix of the state and the sacred space universities occupy in society and the role that business and others with economic interests will pursue. If one sees the state as part of an understanding of civil society, then the relationship must be a positive one. It can't be one that's acrimonious and fraught by unnecessary tensions and politicking (From interview with Rafeck).*

This study will show that UWC has often exceeded the pace of the state's pursuance of its own policy goals. I have termed this tendency 'overzealousness', characterised by over-enthusiastic pursuit of the goals of economic and social transformation and a tendency to overtake the state's agenda of higher education reform.

## 2.6.2 Overzealous responsiveness

In July, 2002, the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, delivered a seminal speech in which he focused on key achievements that needed to be made in areas of science, technology and development, at the unveiling of UWC's Cray supercomputers.

Presented below are extracts from this speech; I would argue that these form a number of fundamental platforms of reform required by universities, with which UWC is certainly keen to engage. Speaking about advances in bioinformatics which led to the acquisition of the supercomputers, the Minister said:

*I believe the work that you are doing is going a long way towards implementing one of the priorities of the NPHE, that of sustaining current research strengths and to promoting the kinds of research and other knowledge outputs required in meeting national development needs.*

Referring to the continuing and worrying dominance of research outputs by aging white academics, he noted that the Ministry of Education would expect universities to be engaged in the following:

- *Promoting equity of access and outcomes and to redress past inequalities through ensuring that student and staff profiles reflect the demographic composition of South African society*
- *Increasing outputs of postgraduate students particularly at masters and doctoral levels. In this regard I am pleased to see so many young black scientists this morning. I am informed that UWC has become the premier site for black scientists to perform research in the life sciences.*

Referring to the President's State of the Nation address in February, 2001, the Minister continued:

*President Mbeki said that "the application of modern communication and information technology in the fields of education, health, commerce and government will be expedited". While some only think of ICT as a tool to communicate, you have shown through the use of bioinformatics, which combines computers and information technology and biology, that it is possible to bridge the digital divide. You have also managed to focus your research on African problems such as TB, malaria and HIV/AIDS. You have also managed to act as an incubator for Africa's only bioinformatics company, Electric Genetics.*

*Last week I was talking to eminent business leaders... As entrepreneurs, their primary interest was on how education, and in particular science and technology, could help grow our economy. I indicated that there is an inextricable link between the level of innovation and knowledge production and economic growth. The ability of our higher education institutions to generate the knowledge stock must be supported by mechanisms of translating the knowledge into innovative businesses. The private sector and ourselves must find ways of increasing our investment in start-up ventures such as your incubator company, to unlock the knowledge generated by our higher education institutions so that we can show that science is helping to make a better life for all.*

I have quoted extensively from the Minister's speech in order to show the nature and intensity of the new expectations of universities, enshrined in policy and constantly reiterated by high-ranking state officials such as the Minister of Education. That these expectations represent strong exogenous pressures on universities to change the way they operate in the post-apartheid era is indisputable. The fact that this speech was made in July 2002 is in itself a powerful indicator that UWC had by then already made a commitment, and had taken determined steps to change its focus in the direction required by the state.

Its invitation to the Minister of Education to preside over these proceedings, which involved unveiling new developments in science and technology, demonstrated UWC's confidence in its own capacity for transformation and responsiveness, and served as a strong indicator both to the university and the broader higher education community of its future aspirations and its approach to engaging with external transformation demands.

Subsequently, in November 2003, the Minister addressed the National Assembly on the implementation of the government's programme for transformation of the higher education sector, which included restructuring plans involving mergers and incorporations. In this speech, he quoted from the Association of Commonwealth Universities consultation document, *Engagement as a Core Value for the University* (April 2001), in support of the transformation direction followed by the South African state, as follows:

*The world depends increasingly on universities for knowledge, prosperity, health and policy-thinking. Universities are thus required to become engines of development for people, institutions and democracy in general. Engagement defines the whole orientation and tone of a university's policy and practice. Mission statements, strategic planning, teaching and learning policies and research directions must evince and encourage respect for the concerns and challenges faced by society.*

By November, 2004, this notion of engagement had found its way into the UWC Institutional Operating Plan: 2004-2009, and had begun to dominate the University's own descriptive discourse:

*The Engaged University envisions a future that transcends past struggles in favour of an institution that is shaped by the congruencies and contradictions between transformation and global competitiveness, accelerated by technological advances.*

Taken together, the above phenomena of the university's adoption of the state-ordained mission of engagement and its keen participation in new knowledge generation in science for technology transfer can be viewed as critical examples of an approach to forging new relationships with the post-apartheid state.

These are underpinned by a strong commitment to compliance through zealous pursuit of policy goals and objectives.

I argued earlier that overzealous responsiveness has sometimes led to an eagerness to embrace new roles for the university in an uncritical and often undemocratic manner, to the extent that the research data will show that the university community has often been caught by surprise by pronouncements from its leadership on the adoption of a new vision (the engaged university), a new mission (moving UWC from HBU to excellence) new directions (becoming entrepreneurial), or new areas of focus (growing science and technology).

The above narrative paints a picture of a university in transition. For UWC, the most critical embodiment or symbol of this transition is its movement from HBU to excellence, or in UWC jargon, 'shedding the HBU label.' The discourse of 'movement' polarises the HBU and excellence, and has the effect of encouraging a discourse which creates false dichotomies, of teaching focus versus research-led university, of academic development versus excellence, or of undergraduate versus postgraduate focus. Certain components of these couplings are associated with the past HBU identity (teaching focus; undergraduate focus; academic development focus; community work) and others with the university's new identity (excellence; research-led, postgraduate focus; output and throughput).

A major dilemma facing the institution is negotiating this transition from historically disadvantaged and black university to one which is able to compete locally and globally with the best. The leadership of UWC has adopted the discourse of 'engagement' to characterise the new institution they hope UWC will become, but the notion of engagement, as applied by UWC, often stands in contrast to its earlier mission of serving communities of the poor and disadvantaged.

UWC's Institutional Operating Plan 2004-2009 describes the 'engaged' university as operating quite differently to the past one. It attracts more middle-class students who are able to pay their way, attracts more donor funding, serves high achievers as well as educationally under-prepared learners, and engages in high-level research which is contractable and thus able to serve technology transfer functions.

The research data will show that the values and behaviours desired by the 'engaged university' are so inimical to past patterns of behaviours and values as to engender a kind of ideological schizophrenia. This is evidenced in UWC management's constant attempts to balance multiple identities as it brokers its way forward, 'taking UWC from HBU to excellence.'

This schizophrenia is best observed when appeals are made to a past of neglect and discrimination - the historically disadvantaged blackness which thrust the university into the forefront in its province in the struggle for political change – while almost simultaneously the university's leadership appeals for an abandonment of past identity, which it claims will only hold it back and retard its development.

*This university's role in the liberation of our country will be forever celebrated in the annals of South Africa and each one of us who wears its badge and calls her Alma Mater shares in this glorious history. But our honour is not restricted to our role in struggle...*

*Now (this university) has a new mandate: to support the social and economic transformation of our country in order to secure the political freedom we have won. A key aspect of our transformation, some might say THE key to the possibility of our success as a nation, is the development of a strong learning culture in South Africa, together with the development of our capacity to preserve and disseminate the best knowledge we already have access to, while also creating new knowledge and new technologies at the highest intellectual level (From an interview with Thabo).*

The above also demonstrates the rationale behind the university's willingness to engage in the state's transformation efforts. To this end, the speaker couples UWC's past leading role in the apartheid struggle with a conceptualisation of post-apartheid transformation as struggle, offering an immediate political justification for UWC's willingness to restructure in line with national goals and priorities.

### 2.6.3 Shedding the HBU label

It is important to understand this ideological preoccupation with shedding the HBU label, since it is fundamental to understanding the nature of change in the university, the impetus for change, and the academic responses to change.

Shedding the HBU label involves more than just being able to persuade others of the new value of the institution, that it will not succumb to financial, governance and quality crises as other HBUs have done, and hence that it can survive independently – unmerged and unincorporated. In the introduction to the IOP: 2004-2009 report, a sustainable scenario for UWC is sketched out. It describes and juxtaposes three options for the future. One is UWC as Historically Disadvantaged University, another is the Global Market-driven University, and the third is the Engaged University. The first two scenarios, mere caricatures, are rejected in the document in favour of a far more persuasive description, as follows:

*The Engaged University envisions a future that transcends past struggles in favour of an institution that is shaped by the congruencies and contradictions between transformation and global competitiveness accelerated by technological advances. ..The institution offers economically viable and financially sustainable programmes, achieves excellence in teaching and learning and great heights of distinction and competitiveness in selected priority areas.*

In practice, shedding the HBU label has meant, firstly, a shift from equitable resource allocation within the institution to a managerially-led 'strategic allocation of funds' to selected areas that will attract the pecuniary attention of the state, business and industry and international partners.

Secondly, shedding the HBU label has implications for academics attempting to balance teaching and research.

Bluntly expressed, weak and academically less competent students who continue to populate the historically disadvantaged and black universities are more likely to succeed when lecturers invest more time and energy in teaching. The new 'engaged' university, however, values research productivity more than good teaching, allocating to the former greater material rewards through productivity incentive schemes, annual awards and opportunities for promotion.

Thirdly, shedding the HBU label may come to mean paying lip service to community service and social development, since this kind of social engagement earns more accolades than foreign currency.

In this regard, the IOP notes that retaining the HBU label is associated with an *'aggressive and impotent focus on social issues leading to poor relationships with outside agencies and a culture of blame and recrimination,'* while the new and engaged university adopts *'a curricular emphasis on social transformation and development, one that balances a global perspective with attention to local issues and problems.'*

#### **2.6.4. A source of change: Targeting the HBUs**

Of the original ten HBUs, two retained an independent existence, not merged nor incorporated, after the 2002 restructuring process. UWC was one of these. The others were dismantled and merged. Debt accumulated over more than 40 years, maladministration and staff demoralisation were factors leading to the downfall of many of the HBUs. It was argued that the quality of knowledge imparted in these universities was questionable, that declining state subsidies, falling student numbers and a concomitant decline in income from student fees had led to institutional bankruptcy. Inadequate library resources and the lack of facilities for staff and students within walking distance further contributed to the downfall of the HBUs.

Many of these circumstances were of their own making, but to a significant degree, many aspects impacting structural decay were beyond their control, such as the legacy of apartheid era neglect and insufficient post-apartheid redress.

By 2003, some strong proponents of state policy were arguing for the dismantling of all HBUs, reasoning that creating a new higher education landscape would require the HBUs to surrender their independent status and agree to be merged with stronger, often previously white and advantaged institutions, in order that the policy goals of creating a single, strong and unified higher education sector be realised. In attempting to persuade the HBUs to surrender quietly, Badat, then the head of the CHE, warned that restructuring the higher education landscape would entail '*pain, loss and disruption*' and that there was little to be gained by HBUs equating transformation with the provision of '*institutional redress to overcome the legacy of disadvantage under apartheid,*' as this approach would mean that '*institutional survival at all costs instead of the national interest can easily become the leitmotif*' of transformation (Badat, 2004: 23--24).

Badat continued his argument for dismantling the HDIs:

*This disadvantage, however, is not just historical. It is also related to the current capacities of the historically black institutions to pursue excellence and provide quality experiences and outcomes, and to contribute to economic and social reconstruction and development (Badat, 2004: 2).*

On another level, it could be argued that UWC was led to the inevitable conclusion that its own survival as an independent university in the post-apartheid era depended on disengaging itself from its past as a historically disadvantaged institution by observing the fate of other HBUs/HDIs in the restructured higher education landscape.

## **7. Conclusion**

In this chapter I offered an account of the history of UWC from its inception to the present time. I traced its departure from its adversarial stance towards the state's intervention in the affairs of universities during apartheid, to becoming a champion, rather than a voice of critique, of the transformation efforts of the post-apartheid state.

I have offered explanations of UWC's willingness to comply with and remain responsive to the demands of the South African state, and its desire to forge a new relationship with the state characterised by its attempts to shift from HBU to a university of exceptional quality, within the state's conceptualisation of good quality in higher education.

I have suggested that UWC's transition, and the accompanying shift in its core values and mission, have given rise to new areas of contestation and tension within the university. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will show how this terrain of conflict impacts on academics' responses to the implementation of quality improvement processes and policies.

The next chapter will provide a comprehensive literature review, offering a basis for theorising the relationship between the state and higher education in the areas of quality and quality improvement.