



## THE YEAR AHEAD



Dear Colleagues

I hope you had a relaxing end of year break, and are energized for the year ahead. I believe that most staff are now back at work with renewed vigour. Although there were a few quieter days, the corridors are again buzzing with activity. As a College, we did very well in 2013, however we cannot be complacent! It is important that we keep in mind the key projects and activities that should start up as soon as possible. Let's work together to avoid delays in service delivery and prioritise key projects.

### **The Transformation Agenda**

Transformation is going to be at the forefront of our minds in 2014. We have made great strides over the last 10 years of UKZN – Yes, UKZN is 10 years old!

Transformation is not only about numbers, but about changes in culture and approach. We really are becoming a University of African Scholarship, but there is much to be done. Transformation of the racial and gender profile of the staff of the College is an important aspect of transformation. As discussed in my School meetings last year, we fare poorly, as an institution, in terms of Academic Staff profile, and this has to be a priority going forward. There will be a strong focus on recruitment of excellent staff from the designated groups according to our College Equity Plan. Staff who are members of recruitment panels should bear this in mind.

I will personally focus on a project working with the South African, African academics to ensure that we create the correct environment within the College to promote success, and will report on this to the College Transformation Committee and College Management Committee.

### **Staff Credentialing**

We need to support staff to develop to their full potential. This is especially so within the Academic sector, where we are behind not only on our equity demography, but also in terms of staff qualifications. The Academic Staff Credentialing project is a collective intervention to ensure that Academic staff become PhD qualified, and this is again a priority for 2014. I would like to request that all staff who are working towards a PhD register before the end of January.

This will enable us to strategize on effectively supporting you through the year. I note that Professor Chimbari, the College Dean of Research, has called a meeting of credentialing staff on 29 January to provide a forum for discussion of challenges staff are facing, and possible solutions. I encourage staff to attend. For those unable to attend, please submit your apologies so that a follow-up meeting can be planned for you.

### **Post-Graduate Students**

Apart from our focus on our own staff, we also need to pay closer attention to our Postgraduate students. We have identified retention and throughput of Postgraduate students as one of the key challenges which we need to confront. As I explained last year to the Schools, this is one of the areas of our budget which is within our control, and we can shift our resource base markedly by improving in this regard.

The first step is to focus on students who can complete the examination process in time to graduate this year. I have been reviewing the lists of students that have indicated intention to submit, or have submitted, and there are a number of them that, if we focus, can still make graduation. We are currently sitting with 12 PhD students who will graduate in April, but with a further 16 who are still in the process. At the College level we will be following up with examiners etc., but I encourage supervisors to work closely with their students to ensure any corrections required by the examiners, are dealt with timeously. Similarly with Masters students!

Apart from the students who can graduate this year, we need to pay close attention to the students who are in the system. In order to provide the best support for these students, they should all be registered, as soon as possible. It is good governance for students to be registered for their studies, and particularly, if they are involved in University activities they need to be registered for Health and Safety reasons. **Only 59 out of a planned 1992 Postgraduates students are currently registered.** Please can all supervisors ensure that their students are registered asap. If there are barriers to getting this done, then we need to know what these are. Please work through your PG Admin Officers in the School, and School Managers about issues, so that we can find collective solutions.

### **2014 Enrolment Plan**

We plan to enrol 6019 students this year, comprising 3216 undergraduates, 1992 Postgraduates, and 811 Occasional students (the latter being the distance nursing students). For your information, a summary of 2014 Enrolment Targets is provided below. Each School has its own targets for each qualification, and up to date information on current registrations is available from the Institutional Intelligence Website ([ii.ukzn.ac.za](http://ii.ukzn.ac.za)). It should be noted that the Vice Chancellor views registration statistics on a daily basis to assess how well we are doing against our targets, and it will reflect very well on the College for us to be leading, especially in PG registrations which is a key focus.

Herewith the planned enrollment targets for 2014:

Qualification Level Name	Planned
Doctors by Thesis	277
Masters by Coursework	1129
Masters by Thesis	270
Honours	119
Postgraduate Diplomas	197
Occasional Postgraduate	2
Undergraduate Professional	2643
Undergraduate Bachelors	486
Undergraduate Diplomas	87
Occasional Undergraduate	809

### College Strategic Support

It is also necessary for students (and staff) to be registered in order to obtain access to the support that the College is providing from our strategic funds. You would have seen in the 2014 budget, that I circulated towards the end of last year, that the College has made a large provision for supporting post-graduate students and Post-Doctoral Fellows (over R18 million). An extract from that circular is included below:

STRATEGIC FUND - PROPOSED BUDGET FOR YEAR 2014	Note	Budget Estimate in 2014
Details		
Masters Student Support	(i)	R 1 850 000
PhD Student Support	(ii)	R 3 595 000
Postdoctoral Fellowships	(iii)	R 12 855 000
<b>Sub-Total Post Graduate Support (administered by College Dean of Research)</b>		<b>R 18 300 000</b>
(i). This is made up of bursaries for 52 returning students, running expenses for 7 returning students and bursaries and stipends for 10 and 8 new students respectively.		
(ii). This is made up of bursaries for 68 returning students, running expenses for 89 returning students and bursaries and stipends for 18 new students.		
(iii). This is made up of stipends for 45 returning Post Docs and 30 new Post Docs, and running expenses for 20 returning Post Docs and 10 new Post Docs.		

Although this is a large amount of money, there is an even larger request from staff and students for support. We have tried to balance the requests, taking into account the need to meet our enrolment plan for post-graduate students. As such, we have reserved funds for returning students, but also made available funds for new students. Competition for these funds will be intense, so I encourage supervisors to get their students to apply as soon as possible. Given the constraint on funding, and the need to provide support as broadly as possible, we have had to implement austerity in deciding what should be prioritised for support, and to what extent.

Some students did not spend all of their running expenses that were allocated to them in 2013 (although many did). Those unspent funds that were not yet committed on the system were returned to the College Budget at the end of October so that they could be redeployed. We will be taking a similar approach this year, but I am sure that students (and their supervisors) will ensure that funds are used effectively and efficiently, and all funds that they are allocated are spent or committed before the middle of October. Staff and students should also be aware that there is no roll-over of main fund

budgets from year to year, so funds not spent in one year are not available for the following year. We have therefore made allocations of running expenses de novo for 2014 based on the resources available in 2014, whilst balancing multiple requests and calls on the funds. Students will receive an award letter for 2014 running expenses from the office of the College Dean of Research, and the funds will be placed into the supervisor's cost centre so that these funds are available for spending. Staff and students are eligible for funding to attend conferences to present their work, and are encouraged to apply to the Dean and Head of School for such support. The Running expense budget allocated for students and Post-Docs is not intended for that purpose.

Staff and students need to recognise that Academics around the world are expected to raise funds to conduct their research, and that they need to undertake projects that will fit within the available resources. I am not aware of any university in South Africa that is committing as much in-house funding to support students and credentialing academics as UKZN, and the College of Health Sciences is allocating more funds to this than any other College in this university. I realise that there are challenges to undertaking research in a restricted funding environment, but Academics need to engage to find solutions to enable them to do their work in a competitive research environment. Bearing in mind that we are already allocating more than others are, the College simply cannot be expected to and cannot afford to support the collective research endeavour with more resources than is currently available. The scale of our investment should be recognised as an indicator of our commitment to help staff develop their research capacity, but we need to move together on this journey.

### **Capture of 2013 Research productivity**

There is a very important process that is currently underway, and that is the capture of all research outputs from 2013 into the IRMA system. The due date is looming in mid-February, and it is critical that staff get all of their outputs captured. The School Offices will provide assistance where necessary, especially for our many Honorary staff who may not have direct access to the system. The growth of our College is dependent on the income that we receive from our outputs, and it is essential that all are captured. The School Managers will be following up on all staff to ensure that they are on track.

Please note that if there were any outputs from 2012 which did not get captured into the system last year, there is still opportunity to capture them at this stage, although this has to be specifically motivated. Please don't forget your students who graduated, which also need to be captured.

### **Teaching Portfolio and Performance Management**

One of the key decisions that we took last year was that we would take a holistic approach to evaluation of our Teaching KPAs within the College, and one which would support personal development trajectories of our Academics. The approach includes completion of various aspects of a Teaching Portfolio, and staff should be interacting with their line-managers in this regard. Given that components of this will take time, it is essential that staff are focused on getting the key aspects completed. There will be support from the staff within Schools to achieve this, but staff need to ensure that they participate to gain the benefits.

I encourage staff to interact informally with their line managers to ensure that they are on track. Also, staff should identify activities for 2014 within the Teaching and Learning domain which will continue to add value to their development and strengthen their portfolio, for example, staff can participate in the College's Visual Learning Initiative by bringing their modules into that system. In addition, staff should look at ways in which they can contribute to the development of each other, for example through peer review of teaching, or mentoring development of capacity in new staff.

### **Professional Support**

Last year, we completed Service Level Agreements for the professional services staff within the College, and these have provided a framework to understand roles and responsibilities within each of the different processes we deal with. The feedback from this has been very positive. The next step is to develop Standard Operating Procedures for each process, and this will be a focus of the Professional Support sector. I encourage professional services staff to participate in this process as everyone adds value, and we learn from different perspectives of the same process! As with the Service Level Agreements, we will lead the University in increasing our effective and efficient support to the core academic delivery.

### **Welcome back!**

In closing, I want to welcome you back. Yes, there is a context of challenges and hard work that clearly lies ahead of us, and sometimes the components of our work seems a bit daunting.

However, if we focus on key aspects to be dealt with at different times of the year, and if we work together as a team that supports, encourages and helps, we will be able to succeed in achieving our objectives.

Remember, the objective is not simply to get the work done, but to improve the livelihoods of our people through improved health care provisioning, whether it be by developing new solutions, or by training the best prepared practitioners or researchers.

**Rob Slotow**

**DVC and Head: College of Health Sciences**