



## INTRODUCING THE STRATEGIC PLAN



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A belated **welcome back for 2012** to all. It has been a really hectic start to the new year, and it is running away, with February already behind us! For the new leadership in the College, we have faced a number of challenges that needed urgent attention. Apart from the issues that have arisen from the reorganisation, we had to define our budget for the year, develop a strategic framework under which we could operate, and allocate our strategic budget for the year – but more about that later.

### College Reorganisation

The reorganisation is still at the forefront of everyone's thinking. We are finding our way through the separation anxiety into the four new Schools, and staff within the Schools have started engaging with each other. There are still a number of areas of concern which the College leadership are now addressing.

#### 1. Understanding the roles of College and Schools.

Should staff be at College or School level? A major challenge is in providing consistent academic support to our students. Prof. Mtshali, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, is conceptualising an integrated teaching support centre

based in the College, which will provide critical mass across all areas of support. In order to achieve this, staff involved in academic support to students are moving from individual schools into the College Office.

A proposal is serving at the College Management Committee next week for consideration, and I hope that we will then be able to establish more stability in this area. Good news is that the UKZN Central Teaching and Learning Office has granted the College R3 million to fund our student academic support activities.

A second component that requires work is how we use our four Research Coordinators to improve throughput and retention of Post-graduate students, especially the M.Meds. These staff provide a key resource base for boosting success in post-graduate studies. The coordinators are moving to the College Office and will support the strategic activities of the College Dean of Research when appointed (the post has been released for advertising and should appear shortly). I have met with the coordinators to discuss their role, and encouraged them to develop a strategic approach that would add value to the College, including specific support for staff enrolled for Masters or PhDs.

#### 2. Achievement of critical mass in academic activity.

A key principle of the reorganisation was to achieve critical mass in academic areas. This requires grouping of staff into larger, cross disciplinary groupings, thereby ensuring that we exploit the opportunities provided by joint establishments to the fullest. The Deans and I are currently reviewing the structures, including how the Departments should be arranged, and will be engaging with each of the schools

to garner views and opinions.

#### 3. Line Management of staff is still in a transition.

The principles of the reorganisation indicated that academics should be freed-up from administration to undertake academic work, and that we need to achieve critical mass by providing professional support across the various areas (including both Technical and Administrative). This has not yet been achieved, and we are working to come up with correct structural arrangements. The academic staff line management is also in transition as we first need to come up with the correct academic groupings prior to finalising line management arrangements.

#### 4. Devolution of functions from central support.

We have faced a number of challenges in implementation of support, especially regarding Finance and HR. We are working with the central portfolios to correct the glitches as soon as possible, and I apologise for the inconvenience caused.

### College Strategic Framework

The Leadership of the College has met and developed what we view as a strategic framework to guide the activity of the leadership for the next five years. I have visited each of the schools to discuss this framework, and would encourage you to engage with the opportunity for further discussion which is taking place within the Schools.

This would serve to improve and enrich the thinking. We hope to finalise this process within the next few months, and then have a document that provides a framework in which to operate. The key areas within the strategy are: improvement of the environment in which we operate,

improvement of governance, shifting to a research-led endeavour, and increased relevance to stakeholders, including resolving the issues with the Province and NHLS in terms of joint staffing.

To be developed are indicators of success against which we can be measured. These will be measurable, and benchmarked against its current status, and we will set targets to be achieved. The University Executive is currently undertaking a process of generating indicators at an institutional level, and we will align College indicators to these. We hope that the University indicators will be approved at Council in March, and can then be brought into the College for discussion.

#### **Undergraduate Student monitoring and support: improving implementing of the Robot System**

A key challenge facing the College is in throughput and retention of Undergraduate students. The Dean of Teaching and Learning is developing strategies to enhance the College's success in this regard, and the University has allocated R3m to support our activities. We need to ensure that we use this support to fully implement our student support and the Robot Monitoring System, which is a priority for the College. The Dean of Teaching and Learning has been tasked with ensuring the system is up and running completely in the next few weeks, including that the necessary counselling and support for students is taking place.

#### **Staff PhD project**

Staff within the College are aware of the Staff PhD project. This aims to ensure that the College reaches its potential in terms of research-led teaching and learning across all levels up to PhD, and produces high-quality research with global impact. Staff in the College have engaged well with the project. We currently have around 28% of our staff with PhDs, 41% of staff are currently registered for a Masters or PhD. A further 13% are planning to register this semester, and this leaves about 15% who (as of 17 Feb) are not engaged with this. The Deans and Heads of School are linking with each of these staff members individually to discover what constraints there may be, and we anticipate that this number will decline sub-

stantially over the next few weeks.

#### **Budget**

We have received R154,054 million for our operating budget from the main fund of the University for 2012 (down from R163,061m in 2011). This is to cover our Staffing and Supplies and Services budgets.

This decrease has put pressure on the College Office and School operating budgets. The leadership is working within these constraints to ensure savings without compromising our agenda to grow the college academic endeavour. We have received the same allocation as in 2011 for our Clinical Training Grant (R54,6m), and have an extra R17.7m for our Joint Health Establishment budget (R86.1m). This does provide for leeway to absorb some of the pressure.

The good news is that we have received R20.807m from the main-fund for strategic projects, increased from R5.102m in 2011. This is part of the University's new approach to achieving step-change in key strategic areas. This provides the College with the opportunity to fund interventions to help change our landscape.

#### **Strategic projects**

We have identified a number of areas for strategic investment. Firstly, in unlocking bottlenecks for Postgraduate enrolments at both Masters and PhD level by providing bursaries and running costs to students.

Secondly, by bringing in Post-Doctoral Fellows to increase productivity and supervision capacity. We have circulated calls for both of these initiatives within the College. Please ensure that you take advantage of these, particularly regarding the Post-Doctoral fellows which the College has not had a tradition of attracting.

Thirdly, we have identified staff development as a key aspect. The PhD project mentioned above is all well and good, but we have to resource it to ensure success. We have allocated funds for staff who need running expenses to unlock delays, and for some staff to get teaching relief to focus on a key aspect of completion of their thesis. We have allocated funds for relief of clinical staff as well, but this is

complicated by the Joint Establishment, and the relevant Deans are engaging with this to understand how this can best be promoted.

In terms of staff transformation, we have advertised for Developmental Lecturer positions across all schools, and our intention is to bring young people with high academic aspirations and potential into the staffing establishment, and strongly scaffold their research towards their PhD to ensure traction and quick success. We encourage staff who know any such individuals to bring this to their attention.

Lastly, we are also focussing on strategic marketing to build the brand reputation of the College, including bringing senior international academics out to South Africa for short visits. I encourage individual staff to engage with their Deans to ensure broad participation in these activities.

#### **Sarchi Chairs and Research Chairs**

I am sure that the members of the College were disappointed with the lack of success in getting any of the SARCHI chairs which were submitted. This was discussed at Senate, and was referred to a task team to look into ways in which the University could support Chairs with great potential. The College leadership will be discussing this at the next meeting, with a view to a strong proposal going to EMC. The leadership will also look at mechanisms to unlock the Victor Daitz Chair more strategically, and how we can partner with other institutions and industry to bring in additional Research Chairs. These are key opportunities for creating critical mass for excellence in research.

#### **Performance Management**

All staff would have seen the notice regarding completion of the 2011/12 Performance Management assessments. I encourage staff to complete this exercise as soon as possible so that we are ahead of the curve. Within our strategic framework, we talk about a shift in collegiality and governance. I believe we should view the performance management process in that light. I would like to see a shift such that the College of Health Sciences adopts good governance principles, embraces this, and leads the University in this process.

## College of Health Sciences Strategic Framework

Draft for Discussion and Consultation

### Context:

The University has undergone a process of reorganisation in order to optimize governance and leadership and institutionalize effective, efficient and streamlined processes.

As such, the College has reorganised, whereby the Faculty layer has been removed, bringing the leadership of the College together as an integrated unit that is able to pursue a single collective vision, and provide for the resourcing of collectively-formulated strategies directly from the College level, creating opportunities for economies of scale and College-wide impact.

The uniqueness, strengths and opportunities of the College must be strategically leveraged so that it will become naturally viewed both internally and externally as the College of choice for staff and students for desirable values and outcomes.

The College has a geographic advantage that enables it, by virtue of its location, to service the large population of the eastern seaboard in the course of research-led education and training, while providing a unique and diverse "laboratory" for research for improvement in Health Care.

The College must build on its clear advantage of leading, and being successful, in transformation, and recruit its alumni, especially those highly placed, to build its reputation in terms of its new Agenda as laid out in this strategic framework.

The College must concomitantly identify and recognise its weaknesses and threats in that it is currently fragmented, isolated from the provincial stakeholders, and minimally drives the national agenda within national Councils, organizations and professional associations.

The College's prior and existing focus on training practitioners rather than being research led, has decelerated staff credentialing with the result that few staff are qualified for research-led academic purpose neces-

sitating the strategic development of capacity and reputation as a matter of urgent priority. This document initiates a discussion of the shared vision, and the goals that the College wants to achieve over the next five years, under the new leadership.

This document thus provides the consensus and collective view of the College Leadership and the framework presents key strategies and interventions to achieve these goals which will inform resource allocation, and shape the purpose and course of the core activities of research and scholarship, teaching and learning, and, service and community engagement.

The draft document will be taken into schools by the Deans and Heads of School for consultation, discussion and enhancement and there will be an iterative process to generate the approved strategic framework. Following this, Schools will generate business plans which lay out how they will allocate their resources to achieve specific outputs and outcomes, which will contribute to the success of the various strategies, and for which the Heads and Schools will be responsible and accountable.

Schools will contribute uniquely to the shared College strategies to ensure an integrated approach that exploits capacity through scaling effects, to build a collective reputation for excellence and collegiality.

### Vision:

To be globally recognised for excellent Health Sciences research, education, training and clinical practice which is relevant to our local context and is undertaken in a collegial and effective environment.

### Mission:

To transform into a College of first choice for students and staff wanting to engage in learning and research in the Health Sciences, by creating a collegial and welcoming academic environment, which is engaged with and respected by its stakeholders and community, and for which the staff, students and alumni become ambassadors of its success. The College will facilitate and ensure high quality research, which will underpin and inform

teaching, clinical practice and community service, generate credibility with stakeholders, and build global recognition for innovative solutions to health issues and problems.

### Medium-term Goals (Ranked from most important):

1. Transform the culture and environment of the College such that it is collegial, student centred, excellence based, and underpinned by research
2. Transform Governance through unified best practice policies and procedures, for which we are accountable through transparent processes.
3. Shift from a practitioner-training focus to research-led innovation driven by PhD production.
4. Be globally recognised as a high quality Health Sciences research institution
5. Transform curricula and human capital development to ensure relevance to the South African and African context, while simultaneously advancing globally competitiveness.
6. Transform the reputation of the College within the institution and our community, across all levels of government, and with industry stakeholders, and in particular engage with the Province and Professional Boards to develop mutually beneficial partnerships that drive service delivery and ensure innovation and quality assurance.
7. Service the National Development Agenda, specifically by creating a niche for health care within rural, peri-urban and informal settlements, with a view to developing infrastructure and capacity to exploit the opportunities provided by Pietermaritzburg, as well as developing a "rural" and/or peri-urban campus.

*Note: Goals 1-4 were clearly identified as greater priorities compared with Goals 5-7, and as such, Goals 1-4 will be primary drivers of the strategies to achieve the mission in the first instance.*

<p><b>Strategies to achieve the Goals:</b></p> <p><b>1. Common purpose and trust.</b> The leadership is charged with building trust and collegiality among staff and students through developing</p> <p>(1) a common, shared College Strategy with broad buy-in.</p> <p>(2) simplified and streamlined operations with clear accountability and transparency of process. Through demographic and process transformation, we will instil positive attitudes using regular formal and informal communication mechanisms, and building shared pride in our achievements. We must build committed teams of staff orientated to the common purpose and to the collective goals, and bring fresh thinking and new blood into operations.</p> <p><b>2. Transformation of Governance.</b> Governance will be characterised by a unified and consistent leadership that is transparent and consultative in decision-making, but decisive in implementation. The processes, procedures and operations of the College will be brought in line with those of the University and Council approved policies, removing unnecessary bureaucracy, and implementing standard operating procedures across the College, which are simplified, but that have clear principles, procedures and guidelines.</p> <p>All staff and students will take responsibility and accountability, individually and collectively. The College will have strong, common, consistent sense of purpose, will redress poor practice, and immediately and strongly act against persons/instances that compromise our collective reputation.</p> <p><b>3. Build key areas of research reputation.</b> The College will consultatively identify and develop key research themes that are interdisciplinary and cross-cutting, and which bring together critical mass of activity resulting in outputs and outcomes that have a global impact, and are relevant to key health care problems or the international research agenda more generally. To ensure success, the College will resource these stra-</p>	<p>telegically and differentially, by investing in building infrastructure and human capacity within these, and channelling College resources through these. Where possible, Academic Groups within schools will be aligned with these areas, to enhance staff access to these resources, and will be large enough to provide "local" critical mass for those research areas within Schools.</p> <p>The College will provide shared facilities with cutting edge technology and well-trained technical support and will recruit key international scientists for visits to UKZN, to interact with and promote activities within these areas. We will engage with colleagues in other Colleges to develop cross-college collaboration, and bring general science and humanities graduates into collaborative post-graduate research programmes. We will build strong linkages with our research institutes to breakdown the current silos, primarily to link our staff to their activities.</p> <p><b>4. Development of staff for research excellence.</b> PhD qualified staff are a key driver for success, and we will ensure that all staff register for, and complete, their PhDs. To this end we will prioritise the regularisation and modernisation of our staff establishment in conjunction with our partners such that there is a clear distinction between academic and non-academic clinical staff, and that staff are deployed, managed and developed appropriately.</p> <p>In order to promote success, we will implement support through providing staff sabbaticals to grow capacity and linkages, lecture relief at critical times, support for running expenses, provision of mentorship (incl. Honorary staff and Research Professors) and close support through Post-Doctoral fellows, and cohort approaches to group activities.</p> <p>Across the College, we will provide supervisor support and training, and resource support to unlock bottlenecks in research activity. We will develop appropriate career pathing for young clinically-trained academics that promotes development and retention within the academic sector. We will use the National</p>	<p>Research Foundation Rating system as a mechanism for benchmarking, and staff will be required to develop plans for acquiring or enhancing rating. We will use performance management as a tool to promote development, especially through clear personal development plans tailored to each individual staff member.</p> <p><b>5. Staff Equity transformation.</b> The College will grow its own timber, by implementing a College-specific Equity Advancement Programme; recruiting African staff who have completed Masters into developmental positions aimed at fast-tracking their PhD, and with a pipeline into a research orientated permanent academic position. We will resource and support these staff through a unified, comprehensive, systematic programme promoting their successful achievement of key outputs such as journal publications.</p> <p>We will target mid-level female and African academics for unlocking their research trajectory through strategic release from teaching, and resource support to unlock constraints. This will ensure quick promotion, and development of a new cadre of the professoriate. We will support key initiatives relevant to our College that promote transformation, such as WILL (Women in Leadership Leverage).</p> <p><b>6. PhD and Postdocs as drivers of research.</b> The College will develop pipelines for students into PhD programmes, and will strategically resource attraction, retention, and throughput of PhD students aligned to our research themes. We will attract international Post-Doctoral Fellows into clusters of activity to enhance supervisory capacity and to bring global and leading-edge expertise. While we acknowledge that academics should raise their own funding, in order to unlock the bottleneck, we will provide bursary and running expenses for students over the medium term as staff capacity is developed.</p> <p><b>7. Research Fund raising.</b> In order to release the College from the need to fund research, we will promote development of research teams and local and inter-</p>
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national fundraising through grant submissions. We acknowledge that team-work is not incentivised through the current system, and therefore will incentivise collective grant submissions, especially that also include links to international collaborators, and to international agencies.

#### **8. Enhance our Global Reputation.**

In order to achieve a global reputation, we need to measure ourselves against global benchmarks. We will be guided by the University Ranking systems, which measures elements such as ratio of PhD to other students, number of PhD students, number of publications, impact of publications (citations), internationalisation, and institutional reputation. In order to promote these we will incentivise publication in higher ranked journals, publication of highly cited papers, international collaboration, editorships, conference hosting, and service on research councils.

In order to specifically promote our reputation, we will recruit high-end international staff as permanent, fractional, or honorary appointees, systematically invite leading international scientists on visits, and engage in a strategic international marketing campaign aimed at promoting our scientific reputation.

#### **9. Transformation of curriculum and teaching and learning.**

The College will align all its programmes to the HEQF, and develop curricula that responds to the needs of health care. We will undertake a definitive and evidence-based review of all programmes and implement the changes necessary to make it educationally defensible, attractive to students and innovative.

We will offer enrichment research-related programmes to fast-track students with the necessary aptitude into a research career, and will champion a system which retains their research focus through internship and community service. Within our local context, we will strengthen rural, peri-urban, and community focus of training. We will explore the potential for development

of a rural and/or peri-urban campus to promote this, and will take an integrated approach to placement of students for experiential training across disciplines, within these contexts. We will build in evidence-based approaches, innovate in teaching methodologies, especially applying technology to education, and shift objectives, content and assessment to ensure cohesion and relevance.

We will implement quality assurance that drives improvement, including appropriate monitoring, and will include teaching development as part of staff performance management, for example, formally within PDPs. We will be responsive to the needs of the students, and will invest in academic development and support of students, including appropriate monitoring for early intervention.

We will benchmark and assess ourselves transparently in terms of success in attraction, retention, and throughput of undergraduate students within the College. We will lead the institution in terms of implementation of the University Language Policy and Plan within teaching and learning. To promote success and best practice, we will undertake research on teaching implementation and administration within the College.

#### **10. Transform the Engagement with the Province and Professional Boards.**

The College leadership will engage strategically with the Province to agree to a joint strategy, and will then invest in ensuring success in that joint strategy. The Joint Health Partnerships must become the engine for increasing graduate output in the scarce skill healthcare professions and for the effective translation of our research outputs into service outcomes, to improve health care delivery, and embed innovation to solve major health problems.

We will systematically build a national joint team with the Province and the NHLS through regular discussion, bosberaads, and workshops, and generate mutually beneficial approaches to a new, collective vision. We will similarly

engage with the Professional Boards, ensuring representation on these boards by staff who exemplify our College vision and mission, and especially to transform representation to be from young, female staff where necessary. Representatives will need to report back to College Leadership and the College in general about activities to promote accountability, shared understanding and communication.

#### ***Indicators of Success to be developed.***