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4 March 2016

M&G article leaves out vital UCT information

It is deeply disappointing that the writer of the *Mail & Guardian* article “UCT escalates transformation row” (4 March 2016) ignored the information the University of Cape Town provided to explain our efforts to appoint black academics to senior posts – including efforts to seek black candidates for the position of Dean of the Commerce Faculty – and the reasons for appointing Professor Ingrid Woolard to this post. UCT is deeply committed to transformation. We recognise that transformation in the higher education sector overall has happened too slowly. It is at the forefront of our thinking in the appointments that we make. It is precisely for this reason that we followed a very lengthy process in appointing the Dean of Commerce.

UCT opened the applications to white candidates only after the post had been advertised twice considering specifically black Africans.

The selection process started four months before the previous Dean’s departure and took 18 months because of unsuccessful efforts to get a black candidate. The selection committee comprised 50% black South Africans, and both Employment Equity and student representatives sat on this committee. Prof Woolard’s contribution to the understanding of labour markets, social protection, tax policy and the measurement of poverty and inequality make her highly suitable to train future leaders in the Commerce Faculty, who will be addressing these aspects of South Africa’s ongoing transformation.

In 2015, UCT made seven new senior appointments, of which four were Deans. Five of these were black candidates – and these five included two females. The other two appointments were white females. The university currently has a Deputy Vice-Chancellor vacancy that we are actively seeking to fill with a black candidate. We recognise that much still needs to be done, but we are committed to achieving a transformed academic sector.

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